

PEOPLE'S FRIEND

Annual



October 1960.

4 James Street



The Broomielaw, Glasgow

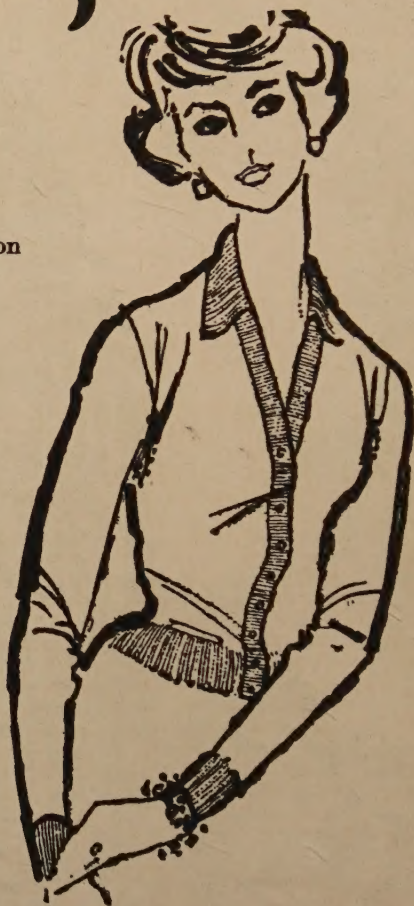
J. Campbell Kerr

Pringle

OF SCOTLAND

COMRIE

A cardigan of
tailored distinction
in pure botany
wool.



WORLD RENOWNED QUALITY
KNITWEAR

PRINGLE OF SCOTLAND LTD., Rodono Mills, Hawick, Scotland



THE TAPESTRY OF LIFE

NO matter what the years may bring, life is a gift; a precious thing. For some 'tis given to travel light, for others handicaps to fight: but even so it is enough to take what comes, the smooth or rough, with eyes of faith that blessing see in all ordained and yet to be.

Life should be like a living stream on which the stars of heaven gleam; a woven tapestry, well-wrought upon the loom of time and thought.

Accept the changefulness of life, its sunlight as its storm and strife, making that light a means of grace, its glory and its blessing trace—with all the good thus far divined—upon the tablets of the mind. Forget the sorrows of the past; its happy memories hold fast, grateful for every kindness done. Speak not ill words of anyone, nor dwell upon another's fault, but on your own make swift assault.

Be like the birds, keep the soul free; soar on the wings of liberty; hark to their songs greeting the day; sing with them too, cheerful as they. Look at the rainbow, sent to prove the promise of Eternal Love; its colour harmonies make part of all the joy within your heart. Treasure life's springtime—gift of youth; its summer days of light and truth; share in its restful autumn mood; its winter hope of future good.

G. M. HUDSON





Delicious
MARMALADES
with a difference

'GOLDEN SHRED'

"The world's favourite marmalade." Everybody loves this delightful preserve, which is made only from oranges and pure sugar.

'SILVER SHRED'

The lemon marmalade that tastes so nice and fresh in the mornings. Try it for an exciting change!

ORANGE JELLY

(SHREDLESS MARMALADE)

For those who like a fine clear marmalade without shreds, this is the top favourite.

SCOTCH MARMALADE

A tangy "home-made" marmalade, with a distinctive taste and chunky peel.



* also THICK CUT MARMALADE and GINGER MARMALADE

Robertson's first received the Certificate of the Institute of Hygiene in 1907, and have received it every year since.

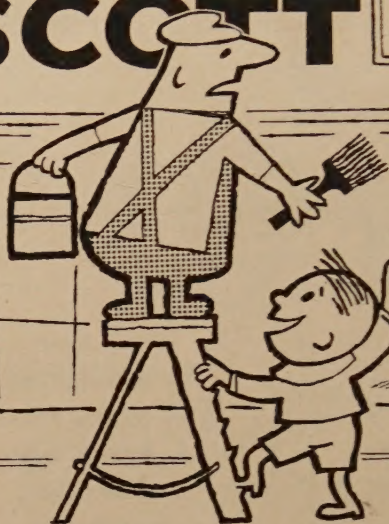
JAMES ROBERTSON & SONS (P.M.) LTD.,
Golden Shred Works, PAISLEY.

PEOPLE'S FRIEND ANNUAL

CONTENTS

	PAGE
A GIFT NEVER LOST	Netta Blane . 9
LUCKY WRONG NUMBER !	Margaret Finlay . 17
RETURN JOURNEY	Christine Maxwell 25
LITTLE GIRLS ARE LIKE THAT	Marjorie Cooper . 34
BEGINNER'S LUCK !	James Baird . 45
AS ONE DREAM ENDS —	Ann Wallace . 54
OUT OF SIGHT	Alison Carr . 62
"CALL AGAIN !"	Anne Murray . 71
TOO SPICK AND SPAN !	Margaret Kingsley 78
THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS	Susan Lyall . 87
THEN CUPID CLEARED OUT !	Elizabeth Cator . 96
AN HOUR TILL THE DAWN	Elizabeth Grey . 103
THAT WOULD SHOW HIM !	Rachel Macarthur 110
AS THE BELLS RANG OUT	Molly Gair . 119
"SEE YOU SATURDAY !"	Mary Dunn . 127
IT HAPPENED ONCE TOO OFTEN !	Sheila Scott . 136
WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS	Alastair Grant . 145
NO GUEST MORE WELCOME	Iain Lothian . 153
JUST A STICK-IN-THE-MUD !	Margaret Nicol . 159
PRIDE IS POOR COMFORT	Helen Cameron . 172

SCOTTLAND



There's only one 't'
in Scotland

Coopers

QUALITY *Tea*

Specially blended in Scotland since 1871 to suit the individual tastes and preferences of Scottish people—There's a picture card in every packet.

ASK FOR IT AT YOUR LOCAL SHOP

A GIFT NEVER LOST



FOR the third time in five minutes Jimmy Ross selected a tool from the rack, tried it on the job he was working at, then put it back. He sighed as he realised he could not blame his tools. He himself was at fault this morning.

And yet it was a day when everything should have gone well. Early spring sunshine streamed in at the wide window. The little patch of garden outside was bright with purple and yellow crocuses, and a blackbird sang blithely from a branch overhead.

The People's Friend Annual

Usually Mr Marshall and Jimmy had plenty to say as they worked at the broad carpenter's bench. Theirs was more than the normal relationship of employer and apprentice.

On Jimmy's side there was affection for the man he had known all his life, and respect for a craftsman of outstanding skill. On Mr Marshall's side there was a warmth of feeling for the lad whose parents were among his closest friends, and appreciation of a carpenter of exceptional promise. With this bond between them, they were never at a loss for things to talk about.

But this morning Jimmy had been unusually silent. There was something he had to say, and he did not know how to start. At last Mr Marshall helped him out.

"Would one of mine be any better, Jimmy?" With twinkling eyes he nodded to his own row of chisels. Then his quiet voice changed to a more serious note. "Is something worrying you? Can I help?"

Jimmy squared his shoulders and looked directly at the older man, suddenly ashamed of his hesitation.

"I want to ask you to release me from—from my apprenticeship," he stammered.

Silence fell in the workshop. Mr Marshall drew in a long breath. When he spoke his voice was as steady and quiet as usual.

"I wasn't expecting anything like this, Jimmy. What's it all about?"

NOW that Jimmy had started, the words came tumbling out.

"For a long time now I've known I want to do something more than—well, than this. I want to study, to specialise in something that'll give me the chance of doing a job with responsibility and a future."

"I see." Mr Marshall nodded his head slowly. "And what kind of job were you thinking of?"

"Engineering," said Jimmy eagerly. "I'd like to start next session and try for my B.Sc."

"And your mum and dad—what are they saying about it?"

"They were pleased about me being here with you, of course, but they'll back me up if I'm sure this is what I want to do. I'll get the grant and things won't be too bad." He turned to his employer with appeal in his grey eyes. "Mr Marshall, tell me straight—am I being selfish to them and to you by making a complete change-over at this stage?"

"If you're sure you've got it in you to be a good engineer, then you're doing the right thing, Jimmy. But there's no doubt you've got it in you to be a first-class carpenter, and I'm going to be more than sorry to lose you. But that doesn't enter into it. The world needs engineers more than it needs carpenters today."

Jimmy drew a long sigh.

"I wasn't looking forward to telling you about it, even though I knew you'd be as decent about it as you've always been about everything. I wish I could be content here, for I've been very happy working for you, Mr Marshall."

Mr Marshall picked up a chisel as he asked his next question.

"Have you mentioned this to Beth yet?"

"Yes, I have," said Jimmy, starting work once more himself. "Having

been to university herself, she understood how I feel about it. Not that she encouraged me exactly. She said it must be my own decision."

"And she's right, of course," said Mr Marshall. "That daughter of mine has quite a lot of commonsense mixed up with her nonsense, thank goodness."

Commonsense—yes, and other things, too, Jimmy thought as the picture of Beth's bonnie face—dark eyes, red lips and shining black hair—rose before him. Taking a degree had presented no difficulties to her, and she was now teaching languages in the local high school.

Success hadn't changed her sweet lovable nature. It seemed to Jimmy she had everything—charm and kindliness and beauty and brains. A white-aproned carpenter in a small town would never have the right to lay claim to all these riches. They should be claimed by a man who had earned success in a worth-while job and the respect of his fellow-men.

It would take time and hard work, but in a year or two Jimmy meant to be that man, offering Beth his love and asking her to share his life.

HIS first year at university was ended, and the exams were over. Jimmy went back to work in the summer months in Mr Marshall's workshop.

And a miserable dread was hanging over him. He was more than afraid that he had failed his exams. It wasn't that he didn't know his subject, that he'd been wrong in thinking he had it in him to be a good engineer. And it wasn't that he hadn't worked hard and enjoyed doing it.

It was simply that the very sight of a question paper and the blank sheet beneath his hand seemed to empty his mind and bring his brain to a standstill. It was almost as if the questions had been set out before him in a foreign language.

It was only to Beth he could speak of his fears. She didn't try to assure him they might be groundless.

"Remember this is the first exam you've sat for a long time, Jimmy. It's not always the best people who get through first go."

It was on a Saturday that the results came out. Bleakly Jimmy faced Mr Marshall across the bench.

"Well, that's the end of that! I should have known I couldn't make the grade."

"You'll not be the first man, Jimmy, that's had to try more than once," said Mr Marshall. "I think Beth wants to talk to you. She said she'd come in later." Then, tactfully, he decided to go into town, leaving Jimmy to himself.

The bitterness of despair descended on Jimmy as he sat at the bench, reading once more the letter that had destroyed his hopes. He shouldn't be waiting to see Beth. He should give her the chance to find someone with brains and prospects to match her own, he told himself unhappily.

But these thoughts were forgotten as Beth pushed open the door and came in.

"It looks as if I shall never be an engineer, Beth. Do you think I should go back to being a carpenter?" he asked miserably.

Beth tilted her head and looked at him with thoughtful eyes.

"Coming down at your first try doesn't mean anything in itself, Jimmy," she said gravely. "That happens to lots of people. If you're still sure

The People's Friend Annual

you'd be a better engineer than a carpenter, well, you sit again in September."

"And if I come down again?"

Beth smiled at him in the way that did things to Jimmy's heart.

"If you want something very much, you have to be prepared to take risks to get it, Jimmy."

"You're right, Beth. I'll have another go," Jimmy said abruptly. "And thanks for helping me to get things straight."

When Mr Marshall returned from town, Jimmy told him what he had decided.

"I thought you'd maybe come to see it that way," was all Mr Marshall said. "And now, will you be able to carry on here with me through the summer with all that swotting you will have to do?"

"Oh, yes, if that's all right with you."

"I'll be more than pleased to have you, Jimmy," smiled Mr Marshall. "I'll be needing some extra help in the next month or two. An order came in last week for a special job. You're the only one that could help me with it."

"A big job?" Jimmy asked with interest.

"You know old Dr Service is retiring in October. The town and district are giving him a presentation, of course, and one bit of it is to be a chair. We've got the order for it."

"Have they said what it's to be like?"

"Oh, natural oak, carved back and arms. Apart from that, we've got a free hand. Would you like to try your hand at some ideas for a design?"

"I'd be delighted," said Jimmy. "It's just the sort of thing I like doing. If you can give me a rough idea of the layout——"

He drew a block of paper towards him and began to sketch lightly and quickly. In a few minutes he pushed the paper over to Mr Marshall.

"Is that the idea for size and proportion?" he asked.

"That would do for a start. See what you can make of it. We've got plenty of time."

Jimmy took the block of paper home with him for the week-end. It was good to have something to take his mind off the subject of his failure and the uncertain future.

ON an October day of leaden skies and drizzling rain Jimmy was busy packing his suitcase. His face was unhappy but determined.

In spite of the summer's hard work, the September exam had been no easier than the spring one. And the result had been the same. Sick with shame and disappointment, Jimmy made his decision at once. He would put Camnethy and his big mistake behind him. Uncle George, his mother's brother, who lived on Clydeside, would help him to get started in Glasgow.

Mr Marshall had tried to dissuade him.

"You've nothing to run away from, Jimmy. You're handier than many a man with years of experience behind him. And I certainly need you here."

"It's no use, Mr Marshall," replied Jimmy. "I've got to get away. I'll never get over my mistake as long as I'm in Camnethy."

"Well, I'll not talk you out of it. You must decide for yourself." Mr Marshall turned and laid a hand on the back of the half-finished presentation

chair. "You were making a grand job of this, Jimmy. None of the others could tackle it. I'll have to finish it myself."

"I'll be back to see it when it's finished," Jimmy said.

He ran his hand over the fine smooth surface of the wood. He had never been so keen on a job as on this. Well, that was just another disappointment he had to face.

He had half expected, half hoped that Beth would try to dissuade him from going away. But she didn't.

"If you think that's the best thing to do, Jimmy, you're right to do it. I'm sorry your luck was out. You've got the kind of skill that works with your head or your hands but not with a pen." She smiled a little unsteadily. "You'll do something worth while yet, whereas I'll never be anything but just a teacher."

It almost seemed as if she hated him going as much as he hated leaving her. He wanted to take her into his arms and tell her how dearly he loved her, to ask her to wait for him. But the bitterness of his failure was still too strong. What right had he to ask any promise of her? He must leave her without saying a word of his feeling for her.

As he slammed down the lid of the case, he heard someone at the front door. No one else was in, so he went down to see who it was.

It was Beth, white-faced and with troubled eyes.

"Oh, Jimmy, I'm so glad you're in," she said thankfully. "It's Dad—he's had an accident. Not serious," she hurried on as she saw him start in alarm, "but bad enough. A chisel must have slipped, I think. He's hurt his hand rather badly, and he's suffering from shock. Mum had just got back from seeing him into hospital when I came in from school. You were the first person I thought of."

"I'll come back with you right away and see to the shop," said Jimmy, slipping on a coat. "You'll not have made any arrangements about it?"

"No, we haven't got that length yet. I thought maybe you could make some suggestion, just till we can discuss things with Dad."

Jimmy walked home with her. Later that evening he joined her and her mother when they went to the hospital at the visiting hour.

Mr Marshall, with the hand heavily bandaged, made light of his injury. But Jimmy stayed behind for a few minutes when Beth and Mrs Marshall left, and then he spoke frankly.

"It's going to take a long time, Jimmy, the doctor has warned me. If I don't look after it properly now it could bother me for the rest of my life. Doesn't give me much choice, does it?" he asked ruefully.

"No choice at all, Mr Marshall," Jimmy said flatly.

"I'll have to get a man in, just to keep things going till I get back. Mind, I'll have this in a sling and be there to supervise within a week. But there's work to be done that I can't leave to anyone else."

"We'll find a way out of it, Mr Marshall," said Jimmy comfortingly.

"It's the doctor's chair, Jimmy. I've less than three weeks to get it finished. And I'll be lucky if I can use this hand in three months!"

Jimmy was silent a moment. Then he took a deep breath.

"Mr Marshall, I've no definite arrangement with Uncle George about a job. If you'd trust me with it, I'll wait on and do my best with the chair—and the shop."

The People's Friend Annual

Relief shone in Mr Marshall's eyes.

"Nothing would please me better, Jimmy—if you're sure you're not spoiling your chances," he said.

Jimmy was smiling as he walked out of the ward. He hadn't realised how badly he had been feeling about leaving Camnethy—and Beth.

THERE wasn't an empty seat in Camnethy Town Hall. Outside it was a night of high wind and lashing rain, but inside there was warmth and brightness. An air of anticipation hung over the hall.

Mr and Mrs Marshall and Beth had seats near the front, and Jimmy's father and mother were in the same row. But Jimmy, with his friend Angus Orr, had taken a seat at the back of the hall.

It had surprised him, during these weeks he had been working more or less single-handed in Mr Marshall's shop, to find how little he'd thought about his failure at university. His whole thought and interest had been concentrated on the beautiful and intricate carving of the presentation chair. Every minute he had spent on it had been a joy. It had come to have a significance for him far beyond anything he had ever done. And when it was finished he knew, without vanity, that it was good.

But now that it was finished, he was remembering once more that he was a failure, that he was not capable of passing a simple examination. He must get away from Camnethy as soon as Mr Marshall's hand was better and he was able to take over again.

Thinking of his uncle's offer to help him get started in Glasgow, Jimmy began to wonder what kind of a job he would be able to take. He should be able to get work in the shipyards with his joinery experience, he thought.

To a great outbreak of applause, the platform party appeared. They were folk well known in the town—the minister and his wife, the school-master and his wife, the banker, the Provost and his lady and, most warmly cheered of all, the thin, slightly stooping figure of their well-loved old doctor.

There wasn't a person in the hall who hadn't, at one time or another, benefited by his kindly services. In a lifetime of work spent among the Camnethy folk he had won a special place in their hearts.

There was nothing very original about the entertainment that followed—a song or two, a violin solo, two readings from the town's most prominent amateur actress. The highlight of the evening was the presentation to Dr Service.

The minister and the banker paid their tributes, but it was Provost Ogilvie who was to give the main speech while Mrs Ogilvie was to make the presentation. As Jimmy listened to the words which testified so sincerely to the simple goodness of one man, he looked round the crowded hall. Every face was intent, and in some eyes there were tears. He felt a sudden warm affection for these people among whom he had grown up.

His mind switched back to the Provost's words.

"... television set that maybe he'll have time now to look at. And this, a thing of beauty, that was his own choice. . . ."

Mrs Ogilvie moved forward and drew the velvet covering from the presentation chair. Exclamations of admiration broke out on all sides, followed by loud applause. Then the Provost went on to finish his speech.

"Such a fine piece of work could come from no other place than Mr Andrew Marshall's workshop. And Mr Marshall has particularly asked me to mention that the beautiful design and intricate carving are entirely the work of one of our own boys, Jimmy Ross."

Jimmy had no clear idea why everyone was clapping. Was it for the chair now drawn to the front of the platform? Was it for Dr Service, now on his feet, waiting for a hearing? Or could even a small part of it be for himself, Jimmy Ross?

Dr Service was speaking at last. His slow voice reached to every corner of the hall as he expressed his gratitude. Then he went on to explain why he was so pleased to have the chair.

"All my life I have delighted in the feel of a good piece of wood and the beauty of skilled carving. As many of you know, most of my little leisure has been spent in the toolshed in my garden. There I've tried, never with any special success, to make something out of pieces of wood. And one of the thousand happy memories I have of Camnethy is of a little schoolboy, Jimmy Ross, who used to appear at the door of my shed at all unlikely hours, saying: 'Please, Doctor, can I get holding your chisel and your plane?' And when I saw that fellow putting a chisel to wood, I knew he had what I would never have, the inborn gift of a real craftsman."

The meeting was over, the applause ended. The people crowded with talk and laughter towards the door.

"Angus, let's get out—quick," Jimmy said.

Angus asked no questions. Jimmy and he together were the first to escape into the darkness of the street outside.

YOU shouldn't have brought my name into it, Mr Marshall. It was just a bit of bad luck that you couldn't do the job yourself."

Jimmy was facing Mr Marshall across the bench the following morning.

"Jimmy, perhaps the day will come when I'll need to tell you you're getting too big an opinion of yourself. But it's not come yet. A man that thinks too little of himself is sometimes a bigger nuisance than the other kind, and lately that's the way you've been shaping."

"I wasn't prepared for what I got last night. I wouldn't have been there if I had known what was to happen."

"I daresay you wouldn't," Mr Marshall agreed drily. He took a small wrapped parcel from his pocket and laid it on the bench. "I've to give you that—from Beth. It's a book she wants you to look at. And since I'm so little use here, I think I'll walk over to Mains and see about that side-board Dr Service wants me to look at."

When he had gone, Jimmy unwrapped the parcel from Beth. It was a small old-fashioned book in a faded brown binding. It fell open where a slip of paper had been inserted with a note on it: "Read this, please—Beth."

Jimmy laid the book open on the bench and read the short passage she had marked.

"If a man can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mousetrap than his neighbour, though he build his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door."

The People's Friend Annual

With his elbows on the bench and his chin in his hands, Jimmy read the words again, and then again. He was still deep in thought when Beth came in, closing the door of the workshop behind her. He didn't look round and she came right up to the end of the bench opposite him.

He raised his head and looked at her rather blankly. She smiled at him.

"See what I mean, Jimmy?"

He nodded thoughtfully.

"That I'm to go on being a small-town carpenter?"

"You make me mad, Jimmy Ross. It's not the kind of town, it's the kind of carpenter that matters."

"And this puts me back where I was two years ago, before I decided to become an engineer."

"And there's nothing wrong with that! For it wasn't a good idea, Jimmy, I couldn't say it before, but I can now. You had to find out for yourself," said Beth firmly. "If anyone else had put you off the idea, you'd have gone through life always thinking you'd taken the wrong turning. At best, in engineering, you'd just have been one of the crowd. In this work you're doing now you're one of the very few."

Jimmy was silent for a moment. Somehow, in those few words, Beth had managed to give him a new idea of himself.

"It would mean staying on here in Camnethy," said Jimmy, "and perhaps eventually a partnership with your father."

"Who wants to leave Camnethy? And what's wrong with a partnership with Dad?" demanded Beth.

"Beth, you mean—that's really how you feel about it? If I could never offer you more than that, Beth, would you still wait for me?"

"I've been waiting, Jimmy." Her voice was soft. "I can go on waiting a little while longer."

And her eyes were shining tenderly as he came towards her.



Where mountains, gaunt and barren, in forbidding splendour rise.

LUCKY WRONG NUMBER!

by

Margaret Finlay



CATHIE DUNCAN let the last few yards of wool slip quickly through her fingers. Then she stood thoughtfully with the cherry-coloured ball in her hands for a moment.

Was Malcolm Reid going to phone tonight? It was almost seven. One half of her mind waited eagerly for the phone call, the other half almost wished he wouldn't bother.

Cathie sighed and sat down by the fire in Mrs Brown's front parlour to cast on her new jumper.

Six months ago, just after her twenty-sixth birthday, she had left Culrain in the far north to come to Glasgow. Against the advice of her parents, and without knowing anybody in Glasgow, she exchanged her job in a local lawyer's office for one in the clerical department of a large chain store.

The People's Friend Annual

She had been so lonely these first few weeks. Then Malcolm's aunt, who met Cathie's mother at a visiting Rural, had given him the address of her digs. It had been wonderful to find he knew Culrain well, and could talk about people and places they both remembered.

But lately she had alternated between enjoying their outings and resenting that he took her friendship so much for granted.

She had been embarrassed one day when he arrived at her work to take her out to lunch. He was fifteen minutes early and Mr Maitland, her boss, had mistaken him for a client. Of course Cathie was forced to make introductions.

Mr Maitland had been very nice about it, though. Before the lunch bell had gone he and Malcolm were chatting like old friends.

That was one thing about Malcolm, Cathie had to admit. He got on well with strangers. Perhaps it was this ability that had made him so successful in insurance.

Cathie had learned more about insurance since she met Malcolm than the average student would learn in a couple of years. Malcolm lived and breathed insurance. He had even convinced Cathie she should take out a little endowment herself.

THERE was the telephone now. She went out to the hall and lifted the receiver.

"Hello," she said eagerly.

Then she paused as the operator's voice spoke sharply. "Press button A. You must press button A."

"Hello—"

A strange, childish voice panted into the receiver. "Hello—is that Dr Munro?"

"I'm sorry," said Cathie, disappointed. "You've got the wrong number. This is not Dr Munro's."

"But I've put in my pennies!" cried the childish voice fretfully. "Please ask Dr Munro to come to my Mummy!"

There was a sob, then the voice went on.

"She's lying at the foot of the stair, and she—she won't talk to me! Please ask Dr Munro to come quickly!"

"Tell me your name, sonny! Tell me your name and where you live. I'll find Dr Munro!"

"Jackie Craig," came the answer. "And I live at Kimberland. Fifty-two Grayson Street."

The child was crying noisily into the earpiece now.

"Daddy won't be home till late and I'm frightened!"

"Don't go!" cried Cathie too late, as the phone went dead. "Hello—hello, operator. Look this is an emergency. A little boy is in trouble. Do you think you could trace a Dr Munro near here? I've got to talk to him."

The operator was sympathetic. There was a short silence while she searched.

"I've got it," she said finally. "STEN 443. The child must have hit the 2 by mistake and got your number. Shall I put you through to double four three?"

"Please! Thanks so much!"

After a few moments the number rang out. As quickly as she could, Cathie explained the situation to the unknown Dr Munro.

"Craig," he repeated thoughtfully. "The name's familiar. Of course! They're new people who've moved into the district. The wee chap had to have a stitch in his chin the other week. Sensible youngster for nine. Right, I'll go straight round to the house now. Thanks for contacting me."

CATHIE replaced the receiver, her eyes thoughtful. She tried to picture the little boy who had come out into the dark to phone for the doctor. She heard his voice, caught on a sob.

"Daddy won't be home till late and I'm frightened."

Of course he would be, poor wee soul. She must go to see if he needed help. Anything could be wrong with his mother.

Cathie hurried along the passage to the kitchen door. She tapped and it opened.

"Mrs Brown—"

Swiftly she gave her explanation.

"So you see I've got to get to Kimberland as quickly as I can. How do I get there?"

"Kimberland housing estate? That's a round-about way from here. I doubt you'd never find your way in the dark. It isn't as if you know the city."

She threw the door wider as she turned back into the room.

"Jimmy will take you. Won't you, Jimmy?"

"But I couldn't possibly bother him—" began Cathie, dismayed to see Mrs Brown's mechanic nephew sprawled in the fireside chair, looking cheerfully untidy in his working dungarees.

"It's a pleasure," he assured her, springing to his feet. "My car's in the lane round the corner."

The car was as old and well-worn as the dungarees. As it wheezed forward the loose canvas at the window flapped draughtily at her ear.

"We'll be there in no time," Jimmy Brown promised. "Wasn't it lucky I was working late at the garage tonight?"

By the time they had driven in and out the maze of streets at Kimberland estate, Cathie had to admit she would never have reached Grayson Street on her own.

"I think I'd better come in," Jimmy told her as they walked up the garden path. "I may be able to help."

"Does Mrs Craig live here?" Cathie asked the tall man who opened the door.

Her eyes went to the stethoscope hanging round his neck.

"Are you Dr Munro? I'm the person who phoned you!"

"Oh, you are? Then come in! It's a good thing you acted so promptly!"

Mrs Craig was a good-looking young woman in her thirties.

"I don't know how to thank you," she said gratefully from the divan where she was lying. "Not only did I faint when I fell downstairs, but I've broken my leg. I couldn't put it under me. I thought I'd have to lie on the floor till my husband came home at ten o'clock."

"Jackie said he would be late," agreed Cathie, colouring. "That's why I came to see if there was anything I could do to help. Is there?"

The People's Friend Annual

The doctor and Mrs Craig exchanged a look.

"You've come at the right moment," said Dr Munro, smiling. "I had to phone for the ambulance because Mrs Craig must have that leg set in hospital. But I'm afraid Jackie——"

"I don't want to go to hospital," interrupted Jackie tearfully.

"Could you possibly wait with him?" Mrs Craig appealed to Cathie.

"Of course I will," assured Cathie immediately.

JACKIE was a little tearful when the ambulance came for his mother. But once she had gone it was plain sailing. Jimmy showed the little boy how to make paper aeroplanes fly faster by weighting their noses with a pin.

After a bit Jackie tired of that game and entertained them to a tune on the piano.

"I should have been to music practice tonight," he confided impishly.

"But I'll play 'The Fairies Lullaby' for you instead!"

It ended with Jimmy playing "The Teddy Bears' Picnic" while they all sang the verses with more gusto than accuracy.

Cathie was quite sorry when it was time to say good-bye to Jackie and his parents. When Mr Craig apologised for spoiling their evening, Jimmy and she assured him they'd enjoyed every minute!

Instead of taking the main road back, Jimmy turned the car uphill and over The Knowe from Pollokshaws. In place of noise and clamour there was sudden silence. Instead of built-up tenements, an open country road.

"Why, it's beautiful!" exclaimed Cathie in amazement. "Look over there! Look at the millions of tiny lighted windows in the distance!"

"Let's have a better look," said Jimmy, slowing the car to a standstill.

Cathie gazed spellbound. "It looks just like fairyland!"

"I never heard Glasgow described as fairyland before," Jimmy smiled.

"But I must admit it has a certain enchantment tonight!"

Cathie was humming "The Teddy Bears' Picnic" absently under her breath as they turned in at the familiar avenue. They stopped at Mrs Brown's and walked up the few steps to the house.

"Thank you again for coming with me, Jimmy," Cathie said. "It was very good of you!"

"Nicest evening I've spent in a long time," Jimmy answered shyly as the door opened.

"You're back!" His aunt greeted them with a smile. "I was beginning to think you'd had an accident!"

She turned to Cathie who was hanging up her coat on the hallstand.

"Your friend phoned. He was quite annoyed to find you hadn't left any message. But he says he'll call for you at lunch-time tomorrow."

NEXT day over lunch Cathie told Malcolm the evening's happenings. "Who did you say this Jimmy Brown was?" he asked.

"He's the landlady's nephew. I told you about him before. He works in a garage round the corner and visits his aunt when he's working late any night. Remember he mended my portable when the spring went?"

The word portable was like a password to Malcolm. He laid down his knife and fork and reached in his inside pocket for a large folded envelope.

Cathie's heart sank. How often she had regretted offering to type the historical novel Malcolm was writing in his spare time!

"Could you read it over as usual and—well, change anything you think fit? Maybe I could get it for Friday? By the way, I thought we could go to that show in the Empire on Friday night. I was offered a couple of complimentary tickets."

The show at the Empire was lively. Half-way through, a vocalist sang "The Teddy Bears' Picnic," and Cathie thought instantly of Jimmy Brown and the twinkling lights they had watched from The Knowe.

Next morning she was in the middle of breakfast when Mrs Brown came in.

"Miss Duncan, I wonder if you'd mind if I left your lunch in the oven today?" she asked. "Jimmy's taking me to The Barrows and we want to set out as soon after one as possible."

A slow flush spread over Cathie's face.

"The Barrows! Why I've wanted to see The Barrows ever since I came to Glasgow! Could I come with you?"

Mrs Brown looked surprised. Then she gave a short laugh.

"Well, there's nothing to stop you!"

It was arranged that Cathie should take sandwiches to the office and they would have a hot meal when they returned in the late afternoon.

Cathie approached the Central Station meeting-place with mixed feelings. She had not seen Jimmy Brown since Tuesday. She wondered if he would mind her gate-crashing into their outing like this?

"You're in good time!"

Cathie started as Mrs Brown came up from behind.

"Hello!"

Jimmy's dark eyes were amused and faintly mocking as she tried not to stare at his immaculate white shirt above the well-cut grey suit. It was the first time she had seen him dressed in anything but dungarees.

"I hope you don't mind me coming along?" she said, embarrassed.

"Mind?" grinned Jimmy. "It's made the day, hasn't it, Aunt Mary? I just hope you aren't disappointed when we get there."

CATHIE didn't know quite what she had expected of The Barrows, but the jostling, cheerful crowd quite took her breath away. The noise, the buskers and the barrows, the brightly-lit bazaars were a revelation.

If it hadn't been for Mrs Brown's tired feet they might have been there till closing time! But finally they were on the tramcar home. Mrs Brown proudly carried the bargain rug she had bought while Jimmy balanced a second-hand dynamo on his knee.

It didn't take Mrs Brown minutes to heat up some broth and fry cold potatoes and beans to serve with her own special meat-and-ham roll.

It was the first time Cathie had had a meal in the kitchen. Her little table was usually set in the parlour. It gave her a nice, homely feeling. She wished her landlady would let her eat at the big, white-scrubbed table every day.

"I wish I didn't have to go so early," Jimmy confessed, rising after the meal was over. "But you know how it is. I promised Willie Watterson that I'd be along with the dynamo tonight. He wants to use his car tomorrow."

The People's Friend Annual

"I know fine," assured his aunt. "I'll see you on Monday as usual."

Next morning Cathie's table was laid in the parlour as before. And the cheery Mrs Brown of yesterday was back to the role of polite landlady.

SEVERAL days after that Cathie had a phone-call from Mrs Craig. "I'm feeling quite back to normal now, thank goodness, though I still have my plaster cast. But my sister has been staying to help me get the house in order. I really phoned to ask you to a house-warming party tomorrow night. My husband and I would be delighted if you could come."

"Oh!" Cathie was pleased. "That would be nice, Mrs Craig, only——" She hesitated. "I'd made a sort of arrangement for tomorrow night with my boy-friend."

"Bring him with you!" suggested Mrs Craig. "We'd love to have you both!"

As Cathie hung up she realised with a rush of dismay that Mrs Craig thought she was speaking about Jimmy Brown! And, to her surprise, she realised she would have preferred Jimmy to go with her. She would have liked Mrs Craig to see him in his smart grey suit.

She'd better phone Malcolm and see what he thought about it. To her amazement he was delighted.

"Splendid!" he said immediately. "What time shall I call for you?"

"About half-past six," Cathie told him. "You're sure you really want to go? You're not just agreeing to please me?"

"Want to go?" Malcolm's chuckle came clearly over the phone. "Why it's the best contact I've made for some time."

"Contact?" repeated Cathie.

"Well, if they've newly moved they're almost sure to need new insurance of some kind."

Cathie swallowed.

"But Malcolm, I hardly know the Craigs! Surely you wouldn't just go in and start talking insurance?"

"Of course not! There's a way of doing these things! But considering how indebted to you they feel at the moment, well—any little thing they can do for us——"

"Malcolm! I'm not going. And neither are you! What a horrible suggestion. The very idea!"

"But that's business, Cathie! Don't be a little fool!"

"I'm not!" Cathie replied tartly. "Not any more, Malcolm!"

Firmly she replaced the receiver.

She saw it all so plainly now—the way Malcolm had made use of her. The way everybody he met was another contact. New acquaintance or just a girl from back home who was lonely, they were all fair game, all insurance prospects. Somebody to be made use of.

Slowly she walked to the kitchen and knocked on the door.

"Is—is Jimmy in tonight, Mrs Brown?" she asked impulsively.

"No, he isn't. And he won't be in either."

"Oh." Cathie flushed. "I was—actually I've been invited to a party tomorrow night at Mrs Craig's. She's the lady who fell downstairs. And I thought Jimmy might care to come with me?"

Lucky Wrong Number

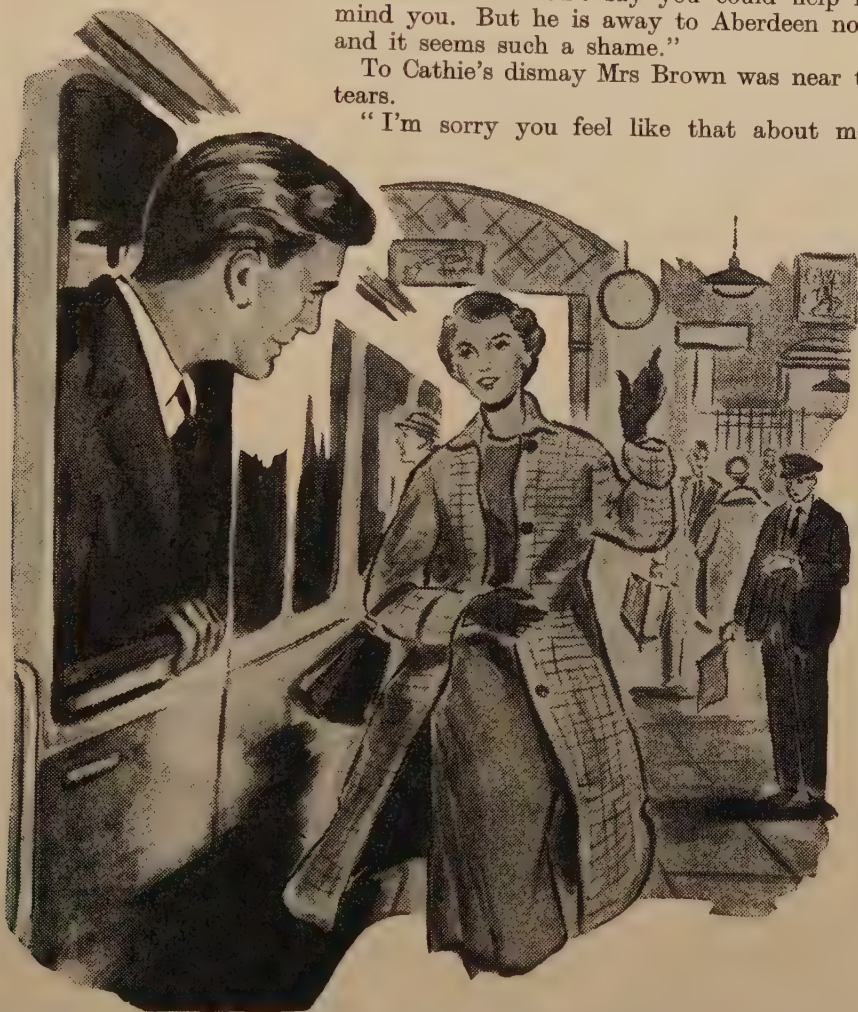
"Oh, you did, did you?" Mrs Brown's voice was sharp. "Because you quarrelled with your boy-friend I suppose?"

She paused a moment, then went on.

"The minute you came here, I knew it was a mistake! From the first day he saw you Jimmy was unsettled. I don't say you could help it, mind you. But he is away to Aberdeen now and it seems such a shame."

To Cathie's dismay Mrs Brown was near to tears.

"I'm sorry you feel like that about me,



Mrs Brown. Sorrier still if I've chased Jimmy away. It was the last thing I would have wanted."

"I shouldn't have spoken to you like that," said Mrs Brown shame-facedly. "I didn't really mean it. I'm just a bit put-out today. It wasn't all on account of you that Jimmy took this new job. You see he and Maisie, his sister, lived together in Shawlands, but now Maisie's married naturally he can't go on living there alone.

The People's Friend Annual

"I suppose he would have come to me gladly. But then——" She bit her lip. "Well, I—I don't think he could stand seeing you every day day knowing you were going with that other fellow!"

"Mrs Brown, you're wrong. You are both wrong. Malcolm's never been more than just a man from my home town. I don't care if I never see him again. That's the truth!"

She stopped, appalled, because it was the truth.

"But I do care if I don't see Jimmy. Please believe me, Mrs Brown. Why didn't he say good-bye?"

"He's not gone yet," Mrs Brown admitted reluctantly. "But his train leaves in about an hour. If you want—Dear me, am I doing the right thing telling you?"

Cathie smiled and gave Mrs Brown a forgiving hug.

"You are—oh, you are!" she said earnestly.

Then she reached for her coat and hat.

She arrived at the station a few minutes before the train was due to leave. She was breathless and she hadn't taken time to renew her lipstick. But the way his eyes lit up at the sight of her was reassuring.

"I'm sorry you're going away, Jimmy," she said honestly. "Really sorry! We were just beginning to get to know each other."

"I'm sorry myself now," confided Jimmy. "Though I'll be back, once in a while."

"You see, the garage I'm going to up north belongs to an old friend of mine. He's always written asking me to join him and offering me a partnership. It's just a small place at the moment, but with hard work Jeff thinks we could make a real go of it."

With hard work and dungarees, Cathie thought proudly. Not by taking advantage of one's friends, imposing on strangers!

"Cathie—will you write to me?" he asked suddenly.

"Of course I will," she promised.

She stood waving as the engine chuffed and the train lurched forward. Then she walked slowly down the platform, savouring the secret she had kept.

She was going home to Culrain for her long week-end, in just a month. And Culrain wasn't so far from Aberdeen!



Snug beneath its mantle white, the dormant earth sleeps on.

RETURN JOURNEY

by Christine Maxwell



IT has been said that one should never re-visit somewhere well-known long ago. People and places change so much it may prove a disappointment.

Yet there are times when it seems necessary to go back. It may be just to satisfy oneself. It may be for a purely sentimental reason. Or it could be on business. That's the way it was recently for one man, who had never meant to go back to the place he stayed in once for several months.

Nothing was further from John Lindsay's mind that morning when he set out as usual for the successful antique shop he had on the north side of London. Saying good-bye to his mother at the door of their house, he

The People's Friend Annual

merely mentioned he must make up his mind about that week's holiday he always took in the late autumn.

"I think I'll have a trip across the Channel this time," he told her. "You're sure you wouldn't come with me?"

Mrs Lindsay shook her head.

"Not this time, John. I'll have Aunt Ella here to stay with me. But you should go where you will meet interesting people."

What Mrs Lindsay really meant was that it was time John looked about and found himself a wife. If he did, she could go and live with Ella in Surrey. Now that she was getting on in years she did not feel up to keeping house for her son.

As he drove towards the town John thought idly of his business. He enjoyed his work—handling beautiful old things, and meeting people who were interested in them.

It was an interesting life, and after fourteen years of it he was content. He did not often think now of those anxious years before that, when he was in the Royal Air Force and had seen little of his home.

But here he was at his usual parking-place. Leaving the car, he walked the short distance to the shop. It was already open. His assistant, Miss Jackson, was dusting the Rockingham tea-set carefully.

"Good-morning, Mr Lindsay. An American gentleman has been here already. We haven't got what he wants, but he's coming back to talk to you about it."

"What does he want?"

Miss Jackson hesitated.

"It's difficult to tell. He tried to describe it, but as he has one with him he's away back to his hotel to fetch it. A bit of the Bible, I think, cut out with scissors. At least, that's what he said."

"We've certainly nothing like that."

Yet as he passed through to his room at the back of the shop, John felt there was something vaguely familiar about what Miss Jackson described. He had certainly seen the description "cut out with scissors" written somewhere. But where? He just couldn't remember at the moment.

HALF an hour later Miss Jackson tapped on his door.

"Here's the American again, Mr Lindsay. Shall I show him in here?"

"Thank you, Miss Jackson. Bring him in."

There was nothing noticeably American about the man who entered. He was middle-aged, with a pleasant face. John felt instantly attracted to him.

"What I'm looking for is something like this," Mr Martin explained. He unwrapped the small parcel. "I guess there must be more of them around. I was hoping you would know where."

John bent to look at Mr Martin's possession. At first glance he thought it was a small picture. Then he saw it was a sheet of paper under the glass of the square wooden frame. There were some lines of printing on the paper, surrounded by little decorative designs.

But it was not printing. John realised that even before Mr Martin drew his attention to the few words on the back of the frame, written in old-fashioned writing.

"Cut with scissors in the year 1712. Agnes Baillie."

Had those neat letters really been cut out with scissors? What care and patience must have been needed!

But as John turned the frame over and looked at the front once more he was puzzled. This object was familiar. He had seen it before. He felt sure of that.

"As you see, it's part of the twenty-third psalm," Mr Martin said. "It's a lovely thing. If I could find another like it to give to my daughter on her wedding day next spring, I'd be happy. I bought this in New York two years ago. They said it had come from Britain."

"From Scotland, I expect. Agnes Baillie sounds a Scots name."

John stopped short. All at once his mind went to those distant wartime days when he had been stationed in East Lothian. Wasn't it there he had seen a thing just like this? As he struggled with his memory, it began to grow clear.

A frame like that had been hanging on the wall of a farmhouse kitchen. He had looked at it, even handled it, while all the time he was trying to shut his mind to the news he had received that morning.

But it was no use. The thought of the girl he loved being lost to him for ever could not be kept away. He had stayed only a short time in that house. Then he went outside, realising he could never sit through the tea which he and the other fellows were being given by the hospitable farm folk.

Another memory came to him. Someone had followed him out to the yard. A gentle voice had asked what was wrong. There in the gathering dark he had found himself telling a blue-eyed girl all about Phyllis.

There had been sympathy and understanding from that girl. He never even knew her name, but he had always been grateful for the help she had given.

BUT Mr Martin was speaking. With an effort John came back to the present. He explained his recollections.

"Say, that's wonderful!" Mr Martin exclaimed. "Will you handle this for me? Write these people and ask if they'll sell. I'll make it worthwhile for you as well as them."

John smiled ruefully.

"I won't be able to write. I couldn't tell you the name of these people or their house. It was just the farm nearest the airfield, and the folk kept asking us in. I suppose I did hear their name, but I was only there once and I've forgotten it."

"You can't remember?"

"No. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I've got a week's holiday due. As I haven't fixed where to go, I'll make it Scotland. If I went to that district again I'm sure I could find the house." John was beginning to feel quite eager. "Would that suit you, Mr Martin? Are you to be in this country for a while?"

"I'm off to Italy tomorrow, but I'll be back in London three weeks today."

"Call in, and I'll maybe have news for you. But don't be too hopeful. It may be a family treasure that the owners won't sell," John warned his customer.

The People's Friend Annual

MRS Lindsay heard John's news with little enthusiasm.

"That's not a holiday for you at all," she scolded. "And you should never go back to a place. You had unhappiness there, John. Why bring it all back? Surely there would be some way of getting in touch with these people——"

"Don't worry, Mother. I'm quite keen to go there. And it might be interesting to see what they've done to the airfield. Turned it into farmland again, I suppose."

But a week later when John stopped his car on that East Lothian road which had once been familiar, he thought he had never seen anything so bleak as the sight before him on this grey October afternoon.

What had once been part of a busy airfield was now a deserted bit of waste ground. He could see stretches of the runways and a few tumbledown huts. Fences lay on the ground and weeds were everywhere.

It was all rather depressing. John sighed. His mother was right. It was wrong to come back.

The house had been further along this road, then down to the left. John drove his car slowly along the narrow side-road. As he reached the wide yard he thought of himself standing there that night, with his grief almost too great to be borne. Seventeen years ago! How young he had been.

As he drew the car to a halt, a man came round the side of the house, a collie frisking at his heels. John felt sure he had never seen this elderly man before. Or had he?

He got out of the car.

"I wonder if you can tell me—were you living here during the war?" The old farmer's eyebrows went up.

"No, my man, I was not. I've been here just six years."

This was a set-back. It was so difficult to ask for people without knowing their name. John tried to explain as well he could.

"Aye, it'll be the Gillespies you're wanting. They're now in Edinburgh," the old man told him. "But my wife has their address. If you step inside you can get it from her."

The farmhouse kitchen looked quite different. There had been a well-polished range when he had gone through it before. Now there was a modern stove. And no framed psalm hung on the wall.

Ten minutes later he was on his way back to Edinburgh.

LATER that evening he made his way to the address he had been given. It was a small bungalow in the Corstorphine area.

The woman who opened the door might be about his own age. With the light behind her, he could not see if her eyes were that vivid blue he remembered. John found himself hoping they were. Then he would know this was the kind girl who had helped him that day.

"Good-evening. You won't know me, but I was one of the R.A.F. boys you asked along to your house," he began.

The door was opened wider.

"Come in and let's see who you are," said a voice that seemed to strike a chord.

John went inside to a bright little room. An elderly woman sitting by the fire looked up inquiringly. Then she smiled.

"Oh, I remember you fine," she greeted him. "You only came once to the house. Your name was—Lindsay, wasn't it?"

John could not conceal his astonishment.

"Mother's a wonder for names," laughed Catherine Gillespie, drawing forward a chair. "But I remember you too. You——" She hesitated.

"I was in a bit of trouble that day and you helped me," John said.

Now he could see these blue eyes again, and they were as understanding and friendly as ever.

She looked older, of course. But he felt glad he had come. It was good to meet people again that one liked. However, he had come on business so he had better start to explain.

"Of course I realise you may not want to part with such an interesting thing," he said finally.

"But we haven't got it," Catherine told him regretfully.

John was taken aback. Somehow he had not expected to hear that.

"I know fine what you're meaning," Mrs Gillespie said. "It was in our house many a day, but it belonged to Aggie Stevenson. She was our servant for thirty years. When we left the farm after my husband's death and came here, she took all her own things out of the house."

"Poor Aggie was unwilling to retire. But she wasn't really able for much work by then," murmured Catherine.

She turned to her mother.

"I wonder if she would like to know about Mr Lindsay wanting her psalm. Though I'm sure she wouldn't part with it," she told John with a smile.

"I'd like to see her. Where is she living?"

"Still in East Lothian. In Haddington, as a matter of fact. I can give you her address," offered Catherine.

John looked at her. He discovered suddenly that he wanted to see more of Catherine Gillespie—much more.

"Perhaps you could come with me, Miss Gillespie? Tomorrow's Saturday. Are you free then?"

"Not in the morning. I look after some children every morning. And in the afternoon——" She hesitated.

It was Mrs Gillespie who made things clear to John.

"You'll be going out with Henry in the afternoon—is that it, Catherine?" she asked. "Why not see if he would take Mr Lindsay and you down to Haddington? That would be a nice run in his new car."

"Mr Lindsay has a car too," Catherine reminded her mother gently. "I don't know that Henry would want to go. That is——" She broke off, looking rather embarrassed.

John began to feel uncomfortable. He was also aware of a strange sense of disappointment. Who was this man Catherine went out with on Saturday afternoons? But even as he wondered, his eyes fell on Catherine's left hand. For the first time he saw she was wearing an engagement ring.

Well, what if she was? He still wanted to see her again.

"Catherine," said old Mrs Gillespie. "Why don't you phone Henry and see what he says?"

It was obviously only to please her mother that Catherine went to the phone. A few minutes later she returned.

"It's all right. Henry will take us both down."

"Could you have lunch with me first?" John asked quickly.

Somehow he was going to have a little time with Catherine to himself! He was glad to hear her accept. Arrangements were made and then he got up to go. But as he started the car up again, he wondered why Catherine had been so unwilling to ask her fiancé to join the outing to Haddington.

Had John been able to see into Catherine Gillespie's mind at that moment her thoughts might have surprised him. She sat quietly doing some mending, while her mother watched television. But her expression was troubled.

Catherine had felt so unsettled since she agreed to marry Henry Campbell. She told herself it was natural, seeing she was much older than most girls when they got engaged. The prospect of exchanging her quiet life for a busy social one with a popular man like Henry was bound to unsettle her. It would be all right once they were married.

She was really very fortunate. Henry Campbell was the successful head of an old-established business in Edinburgh. After they were married her home would be in a beautifully-furnished house.

It was strange to have the past recalled as it had been tonight. Catherine's thoughts lingered now on John Lindsay. She had never forgotten him.

Her blue eyes were soft as she thought of his confidence to her that day.

"My fiancée has died in London," he'd said bleakly. "I just heard today."

What had she said to him. She could not remember. But they had talked for a little, then he had seemed to pull himself together.

"Thank you for listening," he'd said.

For a long time she had hoped to see him again. But he had vanished, like so many others. Only now had he come back into her life.

JOHNSON and Catherine certainly had plenty to say as they sat over lunch the next day. From the restaurant window they could look up to the Castle. John's surprise when the one o'clock gun went off amused Catherine, and she explained it to him.

But as John looked again at the bright new ring Catherine wore, he felt more and more regretful. Had she been free, he knew he would have grown to like her very well indeed.

All too soon it was time to meet Henry. His car was certainly very handsome, but there was nothing about its owner to win John's approval. Henry was just a little too good-looking, a little too well dressed.

They were speeding along London Road, much faster than John would have done. But Henry got them safely through all the traffic. Once they were out of the built-up area he accelerated even more.

They flashed past the old airfield so quickly John hardly saw it. Catherine looked round to give him a smile. Then she glanced along the road which led to her old home—a little sadly, John thought.

How pleasant this journey would have been in his own car, without Henry! But regrets were useless. It was certainly a very short journey and Haddington was reached in record time.

"Oh, I remember this town," John exclaimed as they drove through the wide main street. He looked around appreciatively.

This must be Aggie Stevenson's cottage at which they were stopping.

Catherine went in first. After a few minutes she returned to invite them inside.

"But I'm afraid it's no good, Mr Lindsay. Aggie tells me nothing will make her part with her psalm."

THEY went inside. The first thing John saw was the framed psalm, hanging above the mantelpiece. He looked at it for a long moment, then glanced quickly at the old woman sitting by the fire.

Aggie Stevenson eyed him steadily. She was a thin, grey-haired old woman with work-hardened hands. But her eyes were alert behind her spectacles.

"You'll excuse me not getting up," she said. "But my rheumatics are troubling me today. Take that chair, Catherine, and there's others for your friends."

She turned to John.

"So you're wanting my psalm. I'm sorry, but I don't want to part with it."

"That's quite all right," John assured her.

Catherine was puzzled. She had expected him to try to persuade Aggie to sell him her treasure. It was almost as if he no longer wanted it.

John was not even looking at it. But Henry was. Suddenly he got up from his chair. Stepping quickly across to the hearth, he unhooked the picture and carried it over to the window, in spite of a cry of protest from Aggie.

After a brief examination, he laughed.

"When did you sell the real one?"

Aggie's face was crimson. She struggled to her feet and snatched the frame away from Henry.

"You mind your own business and get out of my house!"

"That suits me," Henry retorted. He went out.

Aggie sat down. Her lined face worked for a moment, then two tears trickled down her cheeks. Catherine went to kneel at her side.

"Don't worry, Aggie. Isn't that the psalm which used to hang in our kitchen? Never mind if it isn't. Tell me what happened to it."

Aggie glanced over at John. Yet she did not seem to resent his presence.

"I'll tell you," she murmured. "When you left the farm, Catherine, I said I would manage fine. But I hadn't saved a penny. I was too old to work and the pension doesn't go far. I just couldn't make ends meet for a while. But I remembered when the valuer came to your house, he saw my psalm. He said I would get something for it, seeing it was so old. So I took it into Edinburgh one day, and after a while they got a good price for it."

"Then that one——" Catherine was still mystified.

"I did that myself. It's easy enough if you just take your time," Aggie said. "I didn't want you to know. And if that cheeky fellow hadn't looked on the back he wouldn't have found out. You see, Catherine, maybe I was kind of proud about doing it—but I wrote my name on it."

She turned over the frame. John and Catherine read the words written there.

"Cut out with scissors in the year 1956. Agnes Stevenson."

"I think that's wonderful," said Catherine admiringly.

The People's Friend Annual

Aggie nodded.

"After that I did some more things like it, and I've been getting them sold. It's been quite a help. For what's a sheet of paper and a frame if you can get a pound or two in return."

"Do some for me. I could place them for you in London," said John. "It's so unusual a craft that people will buy."

Catherine gave him a look of gratitude. They talked for a few more minutes, then something occurred to John.

"You know what I think? I believe your original psalm must have gone across to America and been sold there to Mr Martin. I doubt if there would be two the same."

"I'm sure there wouldn't be. But I would know if I saw it," said Aggie. "Will your friend be coming to Scotland?"

"I think he might. But I don't think he will let you have your psalm back again," John told her with a smile.

"I'm not wanting it. If he bought it, let him keep it. But I'll make him another if he wants two the same," promised Aggie.

CATHERINE slipped out while they talked. She met Henry coming to see why they lingered.

"And let me tell you, Catherine, this is the last time I'm falling in with plans of yours like this one! Wasting a whole afternoon, and having that impertinent old woman turning me out of her house! The nerve of her!"

"Henry," said Catherine steadily. "It wasn't kind of you looking at that thing when Aggie didn't want you to see it. Why shouldn't she keep a secret if she liked?"

Henry stared in astonishment. He started to argue. He said a great many things that were anything but kind. Catherine could hardly believe her ears. Had she really imagined she could marry this man? She had never guessed he was really like this.

At length Henry went off in a temper. Catherine leaned against the wall of the cottage till John came out.

"We're to have a cup of tea," he said. "Why—whatever's the matter?"

"I—I've finished with Henry," Catherine faltered. "I've given him back his ring. It was awful of him to upset poor Aggie like that."

John felt suddenly happy.

"Yes, he might have kept quiet when he saw it wasn't old."

"Did you see that too?"

John nodded.

"As soon as we went into the room. I could guess what had happened. But I wouldn't have said anything."

Catherine's hand slipped into his for an instant.

"Thank you for that," she whispered. "But I'm afraid we'll have to go back to Edinburgh by bus."

"What could be nicer?" grinned John.

And while it is still too early to talk of wedding presents for these two people, one is already being made for them in a small cottage in East Lothian. But then it takes a while to cut out the whole of the twenty-third psalm with scissors. Try it and see!



Wick

J. Campbell Kerr

Little Girls ARE LIKE THAT

by MARJORIE COOPER



HE sat on the bench against the wall of the cottage. A very old man with snow-white hair showing beneath the cap pushed down over his eyes against the sun. His shirt sleeves were rolled up and waistcoat neatly buttoned with the thick watch-chain running across it glinting as his chest rose and fell.

He was asleep, his big hands folded loosely in his lap, his feet in their stout boots planted solidly on the ground.

Little Girls Are Like That

But presently, in answer to a familiar noise, he awoke. Slowly, one hand rubbed the white bristles on his chin. His eyes opened and he sat straighter against the wall. Blue and searching, with no hint of age, his eyes moved up the road, to where the children were coming out of school.

Angus Dowell was eighty-seven but had only given up work two years ago.

He had retired officially at sixty-five, and had thought he would be glad to give up his employment as gamekeeper on the Cameron Estate. After forty years in Sir Ian Cameron's service, Angus felt he had earned his retirement. To mark that momentous day, he received a sizeable cheque and a pension, plus the watch and chain he had worn ever since with such pride.

So Angus and his wife settled in the little cottage on the edge of the village. At first he had been content to potter about the small garden, do a few odd jobs about the house, and spend the rest of his time just sitting.

But he soon found time hanging heavily on his hands. Determined to have something to do, he became Kirkmannock's odd-job man.

Angus would put up a shelf or do the painting. He would mend a gate or mow a lawn. He even helped out in the little village shop when Mr or Mrs Wright was sick or on holiday.

It seemed to Kirkmannock folk that Angus Dowell would go on for ever.

But two years ago the rheumatism that had plagued him for years took its toll. Angus grew stiffer and stiffer in the joints and his legs were always tired. His daughter—who, with her husband, had moved into the little cottage with him when his wife died—had declared it was time he learned some sense and began taking care of himself.

Angus was sunk in gloom at the thought. He was finished, he told himself.

Angus was wrong. His usefulness was far from over. From his seat outside the cottage in the summer, from his armchair near the window in the little sitting-room during the winter months, he held court. Someone was always popping along to ask his advice, or to stop for a chat.

But the children and their visits on their way to and from school were the bright spot in his day. It had always been his regret that Beth, his daughter, had never given him grandchildren.

THEY came now, running and pushing at each other, socks around their ankles, hair awry.

"Mr Dowell! Mr Dowell, I jumped the rope higher than anyone else this morning!"

"It's only 'cause you've got longer legs than me!"

They clamoured round Angus for his attention. He took out a small bag of sweets from his pocket and let them dip into it.

Beth came out as the last of the children ran away to their homes.

"You're spoiling them," she scolded. "Giving them sweets before their dinner."

"A bit of spoiling never hurt anyone. I suppose you've come to tell me my dinner's ready?"

"Aye. And that will be spoiling if you don't come."

She went back into the cottage and Angus got slowly to his feet. He put a hand into a pocket in his waistcoat and took out the large silver watch.

A quarter past twelve. It was right to the minute, as usual, he noted

The People's Friend Annual

as he looked at the clock on the mantelpiece. It always had been, from the first day.

After dinner he was back in his seat in the sun when the children came running for afternoon school. They didn't pause this time, but he knew he would be seeing them again at four o'clock.

"PLEASE, Mr Dowell, what's the time?"

A breathless little voice spoke at his shoulder. Angus turned with more speed than he'd shown for many a long day. He stared in astonishment at Tessa Davidson. She was eight years old and as plain as a pikestaff except for the big, brown eyes that livened her small, thin face. Those eyes mirrored Tessa's hopes and fears, her joys and sorrows.

"Why, it's long past the time you should have been back in school," Angus said slowly. "You'll be in trouble, young lady."

One small foot moved restlessly in the dust of the road.

"I don't want to go to school. They're teasing me."

"The other children?" Angus brought out his store of sweets and let her take one. "Why are they doing that?"

The small foot scuffed up more earth and Tessa's head hung low.

"About my mummy and Mr—Mr Young."

"Oh."

Angus returned the sweets to his pocket and thought that over.

Bill Young, the new gamekeeper for the Cameron Estate, and Jill Davidson, Tessa's mother. Well, for almost a year now, since Bill came to Kirk-mannock, folk had been saying they would make a match of it and that it was the best thing that could happen.

Three years ago Tessa's father had entered hospital for what was only a minor operation, but had died a few days before he was due home.

Tom Davidson had been a bluff, likeable young man and the shock to the villagers, when they heard of his death, had been almost as great as that to his young wife. Tessa had adored her father and for a long time after had been inconsolable.

"Come here, Tessa," Angus said gently, "and tell me what they're saying."

She seated herself on the bench, head still bent.

"They're saying—" A small sob was quickly suppressed. "They're saying Mummy's going to marry Mr Young and then I'll have a stepfather."

"And wouldn't you like that?"

Tessa shook her head vehemently.

"I don't want another Daddy. He—he can't take my real Daddy's place."

"He wouldn't try to," Angus began. "But don't you see, Tessa, that it would be a good thing for your mother if she married Mr Young? She wouldn't have to work so hard, she wouldn't have to worry so much. She'd have someone to help her and love her——"

A small, tense figure was suddenly standing by him again.

"I help her and love her. She doesn't want anyone else!"

Tears were close but now the small mouth was closed and straight. For another moment she stood facing the old man who had tried to help her and failed. Then she was off up the road to the school, running as though someone were at her heels.

Little Girls Are Like That

Angus felt a small coldness at his heart. He had been a clumsy old man. Instead of helping her he had only frightened her the more. He sighed. Jill Davidson had a problem on her hands.

JILL was thinking the same thing at almost that very moment. Since Angus gave up work she had been helping in the village shop. It was a full time job now, because Mr Wright had begun a country round and was away with the van every day.

Small and slight, with eyes as brown and expressive as Tessa's, and fair hair waving closely to her head, she looked younger than her thirty years.

She dusted down a shelf and began re-stacking sugar, tea and tins of coffee. Such a task was automatic and left a lot of time for thought.

She was in love with Bill, as he was with her. Jill hadn't thought to find another love so soon or so completely. It wasn't the same kind of love she and Tom had known in the eight years of their marriage, for the love of one's youth could never be repeated.

What she and Bill felt for each other was dear and sweet, with a maturity and understanding of each other's needs.

But he hadn't a way with children. He liked them, but had never had much to do with them. This made him shy and awkward with Tessa, which wasn't helping matters at all.

"You'll have to help me with her," he had told her only last week. "I want to know her, Jill. I want to look after her. But she looks at me so strangely, almost as though she hates me. What can I do?"

"Be patient, Bill. She adored her father. She doesn't think anyone can take his place, which is true. She's too young, of course, to realise that you wouldn't even try."

Jill had talked to Tessa. Though she hadn't yet told her that Bill had asked her to marry him, she mentioned his name on every possible occasion, bringing it into the conversation casually but firmly, trying to make Tessa see he was to become a definite part of their lives. It was the only way, she thought. Tessa must be made to accept it.

Jill began to take the tins and packages off another shelf, her eyes troubled.

Tessa had been very strange at dinner time, even more quiet and withdrawn than she had been lately.

She would have a talk with her again tonight before Bill came. There must be some way of reaching through the barrier Tessa had erected against them both.

ANGUS woke from a nap and felt for his watch. Three o'clock. Time for a pipe.

He was tamping down the tobacco with slow care when a Land-Rover stopped opposite him. Bill Young got out and crossed the road.

He was a quiet, stockily-built man in his early thirties, with a shock of dark hair. His mouth was firm but gentle in repose, and his voice had an attractive slow drawl. He sat down beside Angus and took out his own pipe.

He often stopped at the cottage, sometimes to bring a few eggs from his own hens, but mostly just for a chat.

They settled down to a comfortable ten minutes of talk, then Bill looked at the sky.

The People's Friend Annual

"I'd better be getting on. It must be almost four o'clock."

Angus reached for his watch and chuckled triumphantly.

"It's ten past three. You're way out as usual."

It was a small joke between them. Bill pretended not to know the time so that Angus could bring out his watch and put him right. Bill took it from him now and held it for a moment.

"That's a grand timepiece. Maybe I'll have earned one like it when I retire."

"Aye." Angus returned it to his pocket, then paused.

Suddenly he was remembering Tessa, the way he had pulled out his watch to give her the time only a little while ago.

"I was talking to Tessa today, Bill. There's trouble there, isn't there?"

Bill's face clouded over.

"There is that. Jill and I don't know what to do about it. You know, of course, that I've asked Jill to marry me."

"I've guessed, along with the rest of the village, that it would be coming to that. We're all glad, for both of you."

"We haven't told Tessa yet. Jill says to give her more time."

"She knows." Angus struck a match for his pipe. "The children at school have been teasing her about it, saying she was to have a stepfather."

"Oh." The expression in Bill's voice told of his dismay. "Then I don't know what we can do. Frankly, I don't know much about children."

"I didn't do so well myself today," Angus replied drily, without going into explanations. "It looks to me as though you'll have to do as Jill says. Be patient, and hope Tessa will come round of her own accord."

"But I don't want to wait. I want to marry Jill soon. I want to look after her and Tessa and have a home of my own."

"There is another way." Angus seemed to be having trouble with his pipe. He lit another match and puffed steadily until the tobacco in the bowl glowed redly. "Marry Jill as soon as you can and let Tessa find her own feet in the new relationship."

A gleam of hope appeared in Bill's eyes.

"Do you think it would work?"

"I don't know. But no one knows if waiting will bring the answer either."

"You're right," he said. "When I see Jill tonight I'm going to try to persuade her to my way of thinking."

After he had gone Angus sat quietly, wondering if he had done right. He hadn't decided by the time his head nodded again in the afternoon sun. He wasn't any more sure when the familiar rush of footsteps and the sound of young voices roused him once again.

Tessa wasn't with the other children, and she hadn't passed by the time Angus went in for tea. Afterwards he sat in the little front room, with the window up, as he did so often in the cool of the evening. It wasn't until half-past seven that a small, dishevelled figure rushed past without a look. Where had young Tessa been all this time?

JILL had the same thought when Tessa came in, a little shamefaced but stubbornly aloof against the scolding she expected.

Jill did scold, because she had been afraid while waiting, wondering why Tessa stayed out so long, wondering if she ought to go in search of her.

Little Girls Are Like That

Fear made her tongue sharper than she intended. Tessa went to bed after very little supper, her mouth again a straight line, her eyes strangely quiet.

When Bill came a little after eight o'clock Jill poured out her fears.

"She goes off like that after school, Bill, because she knows I won't be home until the shop closes. If I were here all the time it might be different."

Bill sat down and took her hand in his.

"You oughtn't to have all this worry alone. Look, darling, I've been thinking today and I feel there's only one solution. We'll get married as soon as we can and I'm sure everything will turn out all right. When it's an accomplished fact Tessa will just have to accept it. It might take a little time but I'm sure she'll come round to our way of thinking in the end. What do you say?"

"Oh, Bill!" Jill had tears in her eyes. "I don't know. I've got to think of Tessa too. What if she won't settle down to the new life?"

Bill's eyes suddenly hardened.

"Are you trying to tell me that unless Tessa accepts me you won't either? Or is Tessa just an excuse—Perhaps you're having second thoughts about the idea."

He knew he was being unfair but he couldn't help himself.

"No, Bill!" Jill's hand twisted in his, her eyes were wide with distress. "Of course I want to marry you, I want that more than anything. But Tessa is a problem. We've got to decide what to do about her first."

OUTSIDE the half-open door of the sitting-room a small figure stiffened. Tessa, in pyjamas, had come down quietly, on her way to the kitchen in search of something to eat.

But suddenly she didn't feel hungry any more. She was only conscious of her mother's voice, repeating itself again and again in her mind.

"I want to marry you . . . more than anything. But Tessa is a problem."

Tessa was upstairs and in bed again without realising how she had got there.

She sat up straight under the covers, her thin arms hugging her knees, her brown eyes staring straight ahead without any expression at all.

They were probably down there now deciding what they were going to do with her so that they could get married. He didn't like her or want her. She knew that because he didn't talk to her very much when she was there. He always seemed glad when she left him alone with Mummy.

Tessa felt lost and alone and suddenly a child no more. No one understood what she felt. No one except Grandmother Davidson.

The thought of her grandmother suddenly entered Tessa's mind. Granny Davidson, to whom she had gone for two weeks at Easter, travelling all by herself on the train. Her father's mother lived on the outskirts of Edinburgh, a plump, cheerful little woman, independent and dominant of character. She thought the world of Tessa and spoiled her when they were together.

Tessa's hands were still as she slowly straightened her legs. She had money in her piggy-bank, enough for the fare. If she went to live with Grandmother Davidson, Mummy could marry Mr Young and she, Tessa, wouldn't be a problem to them.

She lay down, her eyes wide open. It was funny, she thought detachedly,

The People's Friend Annual

she didn't feel at all miserable at the thought of leaving Mummy, perhaps for ever and ever.

Tessa didn't realise the effect of shock. She didn't know that feeling could return with even greater intensity once the shock had worn off.

THE next morning Tessa got up as usual and had her breakfast with her mother, who kept glancing at her worriedly, unused to her silence.

Last night nothing had really been settled between her and Bill, except that he had agreed to wait a little while longer, to please her.

Tessa always went off first. Jill didn't have to be at the shop until half-past nine, which gave her time to prepare the dinner before she went. Tessa submitted to being kissed and went off down the road.

But once out of sight she turned at the last house and made her way back through the fields. Her plan was all worked out and she was only waiting for her mother to leave the house to put it into action. The morning train left at half-past ten. If she hurried she would catch it.

The money rolled out from the wide opening in her piggy-bank in pennies, threepenny bits and sixpences. Tessa gathered it all up carefully and tied it into a handkerchief. She got her pyjamas from under her pillow and her toothbrush from the bathroom. She found the suitcase she usually took on her holidays and crammed everything into it.

Then came the hardest part—her letter to Mummy.

Downstairs in the kitchen Tessa got a piece of paper and a pencil and sat at the table, sucking her pencil for a long time in thought. It was strange, but she still didn't feel anything. She bent her head at last and, in round, childish lettering, wrote:—

"I'm going to live with Granny Davidson so I won't be a problem to you when you marry Mr Young."

She ended it as she had always been taught to end her letters, "With lots of love from Tessa." Then she added some kisses for good measure.

The ending looked out of place after the bald statement above it. She added a P.S.

"I've taken the money from my piggy-bank for the train fare."

She would have to pass the school on her way to the station. But if she ran she might not be seen and stopped.

ANGUS saw Tessa coming long before she was aware of him. He stared down the road with eyes as bright and sharp as they had ever been.

There was something wrong. He sensed it at once, and not only because he knew she should have been in school long ago.

Tessa became aware of him sitting on the bench a moment later. She had forgotten the hazard of Angus and she stopped in the road, undecided. Perhaps she could run past him too.

But she couldn't run all the way. She walked on slowly, one wary eye on the big man sitting so still outside his home.

Just as she drew level with him Beth came out of the cottage, her father's pipe in one hand.

"You'll be wanting this," she began, then caught sight of Tessa. "My goodness, you're late this morning. Did you sleep in?"

Tessa stood still, slight colour creeping into her cheeks.

Little Girls Are Like That

"Well, now, Beth." Angus put the pipe into his pocket. "A little lateness doesn't matter now and again. See if you can find a glass of your home-made lemonade for Tessa, and maybe a piece of your fruit-cake. If she's late already another ten minutes isn't going to do any harm."

After one astonished look at her father, Beth went to do as she was told. Her father was up to something, she realised, but didn't know what.



Too young and inexperienced to cope with a situation that had suddenly got out of hand, Tessa found herself sitting beside Angus. He took the glass and plate from his daughter and then, with another look of command, sent her indoors again.

"You'd better put down that suitcase while you deal with this."

He watched Tessa as she put the suitcase on the ground. She took the lemonade, put the plate on her knee, and sipped at the glass slowly.

The People's Friend Annual

Suddenly the catch on the suitcase snapped open. A crumpled pair of pyjamas and a toothbrush were bared to the sunshine.

Angus and Tessa looked down at them and then at each other.

"Going somewhere?" Angus asked casually.

"I—I'm going to Granny Davidson." Tessa lowered her eyes. "I'd better not stop long or I'll miss the train."

"Hmm." After a searching look at his young companion Angus rubbed the stubble on his chin and took out his watch.

"Which train are you planning to catch?"

"The half-past ten."

"Then you've plenty of time." Angus gravely returned the watch to its pocket. "It's not ten o'clock yet."

"But it was ten o'clock when I left home," Tessa said.

"It couldn't have been," Angus replied calmly. "That watch of mine hasn't told me the wrong time in over twenty years."

Just for a moment Tessa wasn't sure whether to believe him. Then she remembered the times Angus had told her and the other children just that when he showed them the watch. It had always been right when she saw it. Perhaps the clock at home had been wrong.

Angus sat watching her eat the cake and drink the lemonade.

"So you're going to stay with your granny," he said. "I take it your mummy doesn't know you're going."

"No." Her voice was low. "I—I didn't tell her."

SUDDENLY Tessa's feelings came to life again. The warm sunshine, the lemonade, and the piece of cake that was so like that her mother made, plus the shrewd yet kindly eyes of Angus Dowell, did their work. Pain and fear and hurt brought the slow tears rolling down her cheeks.

"I—I don't want to go."

Angus blinked and cleared his throat. He had to be careful how he handled this. There must be no clumsiness this time.

"Then why are you doing it, Tessa?"

"Because Mummy wants to marry Mr Young. She wants to do that more than anything. I heard her say so last night. But she can't, because I'm a trouble to them both." The tears flowed even faster.

A small silence followed her words as Angus thought them over.

"Did you know that I once lived in that cottage Bill Young lives in now, Tessa?" he asked abruptly.

"N—no."

"Well I did, for forty years. Beth was born there and what fun we had when she was a little girl about your age." He suppressed a smile at Tessa's suddenly ill-contained astonishment that Beth could have been anything but the comfortable almost-sixtyish person she was now. "She used to come with me when I went on my rounds of the estate woods. She used to enjoy it. There's so much to see and do there. New trees to be planted, old ones to come down, the birds nesting."

He looked at Tessa. The tears were drying on her cheeks.

"Did you ever have a dog?" he shot at her, and smiled as she shook her head.

"There was a time when we had three. Mongrels, all of them, but well-

Little Girls Are Like That

loved for all that. They were Beth's dogs. They followed no one else. When we had the other children home to play it was a grand time for them all. They were envious of Beth, you see, for having the woods to herself."

OUT of the corner of his eye Angus saw the puffs of white smoke in the distance. It was the ten-thirty train, going out on time today.

Tessa was brushing the remaining tears away from her cheeks with unsteady hands. Angus took out a huge handkerchief and gave it to her silently. When it was back in his pocket he spoke gently.

"I'm afraid the train has gone, Tessa. My—my watch must have been wrong. What are you going to do now?"

Tessa blinked. She got down from the bench and stood bewildered in the road.

"Of course," Angus remarked casually, "you could go home. It seems to me there's a lot you could do there. For instance, did you know that Bill Young is very lonely, Tessa? He was telling me about it only yesterday. He's lonely in that cottage. He wants to make it into a home with you and your mummy."

"He doesn't like me." The words were a flat statement of fact.

"Now that's where you're wrong. He likes you and wants you very much, but he doesn't know much about little girls. Some people are like that, Tessa. They have to be helped."

She needn't believe him, there was no reason for her to do so.

Tessa looked into the old man's eyes and saw the honesty there. She had to believe him.

"I don't want a stepfather." But the words wavered with a sudden indecision and Angus pressed home his point.

"If it comes to that, he doesn't want a step-daughter. He wouldn't know what to do with one. He just wants you, only he's too shy to tell you in the right way."

The message got home at last as Tessa, her eyes round, contemplated the old man's words. Of course, folk would call her Mr Young's step-daughter, but she wouldn't ever feel like one. She'd just feel like herself. Was that how he felt, too? Perhaps it was time she began to find out for herself what he was really like.

"I think I'd better go home," she said. "Thank you for the lemonade and the cake."

Her mother wouldn't be home until half-past twelve. She would be in plenty of time to destroy the note she had left and put the money and pyjamas back where they belonged.

She trudged back along the dusty road, her thoughts still in a muddle. Mr Young was lonely, Mr Dowell said. He wanted someone to teach him about children. But how was she going to teach him anything when he didn't talk to her much? She sighed. He was as much a problem to her as she was to him.

Tessa pushed open the kitchen door and stood looking at Bill Young, who had her note in his hand. The Land-Rover standing before the cottage had told her he was there, and the eggs on the table gave the reason for his coming.

He turned to face her, a jumble of emotions flitting across his face.

The People's Friend Annual

"I didn't know what to do when I found this, Tessa," he said. "I thought of what your mummy would feel when I had to tell her you had gone."

"I'm sorry," Tessa said, "I just didn't want to be a trouble to you."

"Why did you come back?"

"Because Mr Dowell said you were lonely and didn't know much about children. He said you didn't want a step-daughter—only me."

"Mr Dowell was right."

Bill looked down at the note in his hand. Then he made the one brilliant stroke that freed them forever from the past.

"There's no need for your mummy to know about this."

It was to be a secret between them. The first of many. They stood for another moment, then Bill thrust the note into his pocket, keeping his hand there as though to make sure of it.

His other hand was by his side. A big hand, Tessa noticed, like her father's. But this one looked lonely.

Her small hand came up tentatively and touched Bill's slack fingers. Then the two hands slipped together and held, as though meant to be.

"When we go to live in your cottage," Tessa said, "shall we have a dog? Mr Dowell's Beth had three."

She was a child again, with only a child's thoughts.

"We'll have four," Bill replied grandly.

It wasn't so hard understanding children, he told himself with surprise and delight. Not now that he had Tessa's hand in his and her clear, child's eyes smiling into his.

And Tessa? Well, Tessa was thinking that it was going to be easy teaching Mr Young about children. She knew that through the clasp of her hand, and the warm feeling flooding her heart as she looked at him.

It was about then that Angus, on the bench before his cottage, took out his watch and looked at it. Half-past eleven. Time for a short nap before the children came out of school.

It was a good watch, he thought drowsily, not a minute fast or slow.

It hadn't let him down yet.



The mists of early dawn disperse, and a bright new day is born.

by JAMES
BAIRD



Beginner's Luck!

THE Big Fellow refused to be caught. Every member of the Lurgie Angling Club had had a go at bringing him to the bank but without success. Many a cunning lure of horsehair and game-fowl feathers had been thrown right on top of his nose where he lay in the peaty-brown depths of the pool just below the bridge.

The People's Friend Annual

"Six pounds if he's an ounce!" asserted old John Crombie, of Lurgie Mains, upholding the honour of the Big Fellow—and of Lurgie, of course—while talking to a man from Carminnie, the village across the Black Hill. "And you've got nothing like him in your bit puddle of a burn!"

Some Lurgie anglers resented the Big Fellow for refusing to surrender to their skill and cunning. He represented an element of failure in their lives. But there were others who, even while fishing, hoped secretly the Big Fellow would never be caught. He was a symbol of Lurgie in all his shrewdness and independence.

The good wives of Lurgie did not like the Big Fellow at all. That is putting it mildly. Many an evening after tea, instead of going out to the garden as was his bounden duty, the man of the house would look out of the window at the silver ribbon of the river and sigh deeply.

"Don't you think it's high time you cut the back green or earthed up the potatoes or planted the leeks?" his wife would say sharply, recognising the symptoms.

The good man of the house, saying nothing, would step upstairs and reappear with his rod. Then, on the doorstep, he would turn round.

"I think I'll go down and have a try for the Big Fellow tonight," he'd remark casually.

No, the women of Lurgie had no cause to regard the Big Fellow as a friend. So perhaps it was no more than justice that it was finally a woman who—but we'd start begin at the beginning.

JESSIE McMINN liked Lurgie. No, she wasn't a Lurgie lass herself. Luck had not favoured her that far. But her sister Meg had married John Crombie's stockman, George Henderson. Meg had now two of a family—young Peter, aged eleven, and Agnes, who was only six.

Jessie came from the little market town of Abercouthie, about twelve miles down the valley from Lurgie. She was secretary and general clerkess to Alexander Scott, the auctioneer who carried out the weekly stock and implement sales there. On her holidays and occasional days off, she liked to take the bus up to the little cottage just off the road below Lurgie Mains. There she could spend a relaxing time with her sister and her family.

Relaxing is maybe not the right word. Young Peter had a round, red face and blue eyes that could at one moment look positively angelic and be twinkling with mischief the next. Meg had her work cut out keeping elbows in his jerseys and a seat in his trousers.

His latest craze was fishing, and little wonder, since he heard his elders talking often on the subject. His first efforts with a willow wand, a length of black cotton thread and a bent pin had scarcely been successful. All he got was a ducking in the pool below the bridge.

He might have drowned had his plight not been spotted by David Candlish, a young market-gardener whose plots bordered the river. David had dived in and rescued the boy, then brought him home dripping and repentant.

Peter's father was for taking strong measures, but David talked him out of it. After all, he declared, the boy had surely learned a lesson. And surely the shortness of the rod had contributed to his danger? The lad had been compelled to go too near the edge.

Young Peter, of course, nodded agreement. He liked the turn the con-

versation had taken. He repeated it nearly word for word the next time Aunt Jessie came up to the cottage for a week-end. And Jessie found herself, in a moment of weakness, promising Peter to get him a real rod.

One day, a week or so later, Jessie walked into a shop in Abercouthie and asked for a rod.

"What kind?" asked the earnest young man behind the counter.

"Just a rod," Jessie repeated.

The shop specialised in sports gear. They kept dozens of rods, and the assistant looked puzzled. To go into a shop and simply ask for a rod Why, it was like a woman going into a milliner's and saying, "I want a hat. Yes, that one over there. Just put it in a box for me. How much?"

Finally, however, Jessie made the young man understand what she wanted. She got a cheap rod, complete with all the necessary tackle, and took it up to young Peter on her next week-end off.

JESSIE came to enjoy the river bank. At first she went down out of a sense of obligation, for her brother-in-law was not too keen to let young Peter go unaccompanied. Soon, on fine Sunday afternoons, she came to enjoy the shimmer from the water, the rippling song of the current and the furtive games of the voles that had made their homes in the river bank.

She loved to sit on a little camp stool underneath the willows, reading or knitting, while Peter practised casting his line and playing a trout.

Jessie met Joe Sturrock there one evening. He had been angling just downriver from Peter for an hour or so, and when the boy decided to pack up for the night, Jessie got into conversation with the young man. He was quiet-voiced and pleasant mannered, and chaffed Jessie good-humouredly as he escorted her and Peter back to the village.

Peter, of course, told of the meeting once they were back at the fireside.

"What did you say his name was?" asked his father, looking up from his newspaper.

"Joe Sturrock," Jessie replied.

George's face darkened.

"A Carminnie man!" he snorted.

"And what's wrong with that?" Jessie asked.

George just grunted and went on with his reading. What he did not say was that a Carminnie man had no moral right to be fishing in the river unless he was a member of the Lurgie Anglers' Association. They owned the angling rights on the water for a mile both above and below the village and went to great expense each year to restock the river with young trout.

JESSIE met Joe Sturrock on many a fine Saturday afternoon after that. He had a mop of dark hair swept back in waves from his sun-browned brow, a stocky physique that hinted at great strength and a half-gallant, half-teasing way of treating her.

Peter was thrashing the water one afternoon, and Jessie was engrossed in knitting a pullover for him. The steady rhythm of her skilful fingers had ceased for a moment as she studied the pattern that lay across her knee.

A gentle breeze, scented with river water and hay and budding foliage, stirred her skirt and played among her auburn hair. A shadow fell across

The People's Friend Annual

the grass in front of her and she looked up. It was Joe Sturrock. "Hullo there!" he said cheerily. "I was just having a sandwich and a cup of tea down there. I thought I'd ask if you'd like one."

Jessie sipped it gratefully. It was hot and strong and milky, just as she liked it. All at once an expression of mock-perplexity creased her broad brow and wrinkled her slightly snub nose.

"But you're a Carminnie man!" she said. "I always thought they had no dealings with Lurgonians."

Joe chuckled.

"That's an old story," he told her. "But then, you're not a Lurgie woman. You're a sister-in-law of George Henderson's and you come from Abercouthie down the valley."

"You seem to know a lot about me!"

"I've taken the trouble to find out," he explained.

The silvery sheen of the water cast rippling patterns across her face.

"You must be interested," she remarked. "But at least I'm a Lurgie woman by adoption."

He was silent for a moment, his chin cupped on drawn-up knees.

"Is that a great obstacle?" he asked at last.

"To what?"

"To—to—"

Jessie was waiting with interest for his reply when there came a shout from young Peter.

"The Big Fellow! The Big Fellow!" he cried, his boyish voice shrill with excitement.

Joe jumped to his feet and Jessie threw aside her knitting. Together they ran to the water's edge.

A GREAT hatch of may-flies was in progress. They were floating down the smooth current in hundreds, their fat bodies wobbling stupidly on the surface. And the Big Fellow was gorging himself.

Just below the far bank, where the river ran slow and deep, they could see an enormous shadow sliding along just below the surface. The water dimpled and a may-fly disappeared—then another—and another.

"Your rod, Peter!" ordered Joe, plucking it from the lad's grasp. "I've left my own away down the bank and this is too good a chance to miss."

He made an excellent cast, right over the spot where the Big Fellow had secured his last victim. They waited in silence, eyes straining, hearts thumping. But though the may-flies continued to be pulled under by the giant fish, it seemed to regard the man-made insect with lofty contempt.

Joe cast again and again but without the slightest sign of a bite.

Finally he threw the rod aside in despair. His face was red with frustration and anger.

"No good!" he grunted harshly.

"What's no good?" Jessie asked mildly.

"That rod—that fly."

"There's nothing wrong with the rod. I bought it for Peter," said Jessie, nettled. She did not like the aspect of Joe she had just witnessed.

"But I'll get him yet!" Joe went on, ignoring her words. He seemed to cherish a personal spite against the big fish. "One of these days I'll

carry him by the tail right through Lurgie for all the Lurgie folk to see. Then over the hill he'll go to the frying pan in Carminnie."

Something in Jessie revolted at the thought.

"But that wouldn't be fair," she protested. "After all, he's a Lurgie fish."

"He's there for anyone who can catch him!"

Then, seeing the consternation on Jessie's face, he changed his tone and resumed his cheerful, bantering air.

"Why all this to-do about a mere fish?" he laughed. "There are more important things to think about."

"Such as?"

His eyes regarded hers steadily.

"Such as the dance in the village hall tonight in Lurgie. Will you be there?"

She inclined her head thoughtfully for a moment.

"I might," she answered slowly, and a little thrill of pleasure went through her as she saw his face light up with a sudden joy.

Joe went back to his fishing. Jessie looked across the water. There, where his plots bordered the river, a tall, lanky young man was watching her. It was David Candlish.

Jessie had met him once or twice at the house. He was an awkward young man, shy and hesitant. She liked him, but always felt a trifle embarrassed in his presence because conversation with him seemed so one-sided.

JESSIE did go to the dance that night. It was gay, uproarious and colourful—and very warm. She enjoyed herself immensely in the whirling reels and the graceful strathspeys. The little cramped hall was alive with the strong beat of the music, the swing of skirts and the banter of the young men.

Joe Sturrock attempted to monopolise her in the modern dancing. She liked his company and his bantering ways. He could always find the right thing to say. But she was not sure it would be right for her to dance with him all the time. Folk would talk, and that was a great consideration in Lurgie.

Jessie stole outside for a short breather. She sat down on a little wooden-slatted seat that occupied a plot of grass behind the hall. The air was cool and fresh and she drew several deep breaths. She looked around her. It was a lovely evening.

Her reverie was broken when she sensed a movement behind her. Startled, she made as if to rise, but a quiet voice reassured her.

"Bit warm in there, isn't it?"

It was David Candlish. His long, shadowy figure moved round the end of the seat and sat down beside her.

"Yes, it is, David," she replied. "I came out for a bit of fresh air."

"So did I."

There was a long silence, broken only by the muffled beat of the music from the hall and the faint ripple of the river down the valley.

"I saw you down by the water today," David said at last.

"Yes. I went down with my nephew, Peter."

"Any luck?"

The People's Friend Annual

"No, but we saw the Big Fellow."

David relapsed into silence and Jessie strove desperately to find something to talk about.

"Do you ever go fishing, David?" she asked.

"Not very often. I haven't much time for that kind of thing. Besides, to tell the truth, I'm not very good at it."

The honesty of his admission warmed her and she smiled.

"You ought to try it some time. It's very relaxing."

A note of eagerness came into his tone.

"Do you go down to the water every Saturday?" he asked.

Jessie smiled to herself.

"Fairly often."

"Then I'll take an hour or two off next Saturday and try my luck. Maybe I'll see you?"

"Maybe you will. But I'm beginning to feel a little chilly now so perhaps we'd better go inside."

Just at that moment the side door of the hall opened and a shaft of light swept out across the grass. Outlined in it was the figure of Joe Sturrock.

"Oh, you're there, Jess!" he exclaimed.

Then his eyes fell on David, and his tone became cold and hard. "You'd better come inside, Jessie. You'll be catching your death of cold."

She sensed the hostility that lay between the two men. She felt mildly flattered that they should contend over her, yet she did not wish to be the cause of any trouble. She turned on her heel.

"I'm going in, David," she said quietly. "Aren't you coming too?"

The light was shining on David's face. She saw there something she had never seen before—a deep inarticulate longing.

"I'll stay out here a little longer," he replied very gently. "Just you go in and enjoy yourself."

JESSIE did not manage up to Lurgie the following Saturday. A recurrence of her mother's bronchitis kept her in Abercouthie. But she heard all about what happened down on the river bank that night.

There were several garbled versions. But everyone agreed there had been a fight on the river bank very late at night, long after all the regular anglers had gone home. Some said Joe and David had come to actual blows. Others declared it had not gone quite so far. Neither David nor Joe would say anything about it, so a great deal was left to the imagination of the Lurgie folk, a quality in which they excel.

But there was no doubt the row was about Jessie. That was why her next visit to Lurgie was a most uncomfortable experience.

Jessie refused to be daunted. She put a bold face on it and walked through Lurgie unabashed, ignoring nudges and stares. The following Saturday found her again down by the river at her favourite spot beneath a tree, her busy fingers twinkling over the knitting while Peter cast again and again over the shining water.

Out of the corner of her eye she glimpsed two figures a little downstream. They were Joe and David. Occasionally they looked hopefully in her direction but she kept her eyes downwards on her task.

She heard Peter exclaim in exasperation and glanced up to see he had

caught his line once again in some entanglement in the water. He tugged and tugged. The line came free with a jerk, but without the hook and fly.

Peter was almost in tears.

"That was my last fly!" he exclaimed dolefully. "I've lost the others in the same way today."

"Then why not make a fly?" she asked.

He shook his tousled head hopelessly.



"It takes years and years to learn how to tie a decent fly," he explained. "Maybe Mr Crombie will teach me some day."

"Let's try it," Jessie said gaily.

"What with?"

She pointed to her wool.

"With a little bit of that," she suggested brightly.

His look expressed pitying indulgence.

"It would never work," he declared. "You need pheasant and grouse feathers and horsehair and lots of things."

The People's Friend Annual

Jessie brushed his objections aside recklessly.

"Give me a hook!" she demanded brusquely.

He took one from a tin box and sighed patiently as she decorated it with little wisps of wool, red and blue and grey.

WHAT happened next has become a Lurgie legend. There's no explanation of it that would satisfy an experienced angler. The thing was frankly impossible, but it happened just the same.

Maybe, as old John Crombie explained later, it was the hand of Providence that smiles on the beginner, hoping to lure him into all the frustrations and heartbreaks that will surely attend his further efforts.

Jessie went back to her knitting. She had scarcely begun when there came a yell from Peter. She looked up.

His rod was bent nearly double and line was whirring from his reel.

"Auntie! Auntie!" he shouted. "I've got the Big Fellow on! Come and help me or he'll get away!"

Jessie gripped the rod with him. The great fish dashed up and down the pool, almost pulling them into the water. She held on grimly, her heart pounding and her limbs trembling with excitement. The fight was on.

She lost all sense of time and distance. Then she realised that Joe and David were there too, holding the rod and shouting instructions.

"Easy now! Let the reel run! Hold him there!"

She did not know how much time had passed—ten minutes, thirty minutes, an hour. Then came Joe's voice, trembling with eagerness.

"He's tiring. Bring him in to the bank."

Slowly and relentlessly they drew him in, his lashings and strugglings growing weaker every minute. His great shiny body was quite visible now. Joe went to the water's edge and netted him. His size made them all gasp in wonder.

"What a monster!" said David, wide-eyed.

"Let's take him home to show Daddy." Peter was almost beside himself with excitement.

Joe laid the Big Fellow down on the grass. His face was exultant.

"I'll give you five pounds for him, Jessie," he said.

There was a long amazed silence then David said quietly, "I wouldn't take it, Jess."

"I won't, David," she replied simply.

"Why not?" Joe asked tartly, his jaw taut with anger.

"Because he's a Lurgie fish," she replied. "He's not going to Carminnie."

JESSIE looked down at the Big Fellow, still writhing and flapping on the bank, and a great pity filled her heart. Was this to be the sorry end of the Big Fellow?

David looked into her eyes. He read her thought and divined her wish.

He bent down over the great trout. Swiftly and skilfully he detached the hook. With a great heave he threw the Big Fellow back into the water where he disappeared with a swirl of his great tail.

"You're a fool, an utter fool!" Joe shouted.

"Probably I am," David replied mildly.

"Then I'm a fool too," added Jessie. "For David only did what I wanted."

"He'll never be caught again!" Joe went on. "He's had the hook in his mouth now and nothing will ever tempt him again. You've had it!"

"Yes, I've had it!" David's face was flushed with anger. "And so have you! If ever I catch you on the river again with your salmon roe—or any other unfair and illegal bait—I'll have you locked up."

He turned round to Jessie.

"That's what the row was about. I caught him down here after dark trying to get the Big Fellow with salted salmon roe. But I stopped him just in time!"

Joe, his face dark with rage and frustration, swung round on his heel and walked away without a word.

The little group broke up. Peter ran on ahead to tell the news to his father. David and Jessie were left alone.

They sauntered up the lane together. Dusk had begun to creep over the hills and from far over the moorland a curlew called eerily.

"I liked you for that, David," she said.

He walked on quietly by her side. His hand happened to touch hers and she took it into hers. She felt the warm tightness of his grasp and the slight quiver of relief that ran through his body.

"Thank you, Jessie," he said softly.

"The Big Fellow will stay in Lurgie now," she went on. "He's part of the place, you see."

All at once his words tumbled out in a torrent.

"And you, Jessie? Wouldn't you like to become part of the place too? It may sound daft of me, but when I saw the way you looked down at the Big Fellow on the bank, I felt you were all I ever wanted in this world, with your kind heart and generous impulses. Do I sound very stupid?"

"No, David, not a bit stupid. Grand, just grand. Now that you've begun to talk, I could go on listening to you for a very long time."

"For the rest of my life, Jessie?" he asked tenderly.

She turned her face up to his.

"Yes, David, for the rest of your life."



And all nature lies awaiting the first glad call of spring.

As One Dream Ends —



by ANN
WALLACE

JENNIE CRAWFORD sat at her desk in the busy office of Robert Grant & Co., the small but prosperous warehouse at the corner of West Campbell Street.

Roger had asked her to go with him to the staff dance on Friday—only four days from now! Roger Grant, her boss's son.

She could hardly believe it and her heart skipped a beat as she remembered the look in his eyes and his soft, almost caressing voice.

"Jennie—I suppose you are going on Friday—to the staff dance, I mean? I wondered if you'd care to come with me——"

She had looked at him, her lovely eyes wide with astonishment.

"You mean——" Her voice shook slightly. "You mean you want me to go with you?"

The slight emphasis on the last word had brought an amused smile to his handsome mouth.

"Yes. I'll pick you up in the car. We might go and have a meal somewhere first, if you like." His tone was light, careless.

Roger Grant, good-looking and popular with the girls of his acquaintance, was flattered and rather touched by her naivety.

He looked at her again, his eyes narrowing with interest. She was certainly lovely. He had been watching her since she first started to work in his father's office.

"Haven't you been to our staff dance before?" His voice was amused. His glance flicked round the room and he touched her smooth hair quickly. "Don't expect too much from it, will you? It's usually very dull."

"I'm sure it won't be. It sounds wonderful."

THROUGH the glass-panelled wall of the small, cluttered office, Robert Paterson, who had been cashier with the firm for more years than he cared to remember, watched the scene with some misgiving.

He too, had been watching Jennie's progress in the office with interest and satisfaction. Indeed, he had recommended her for the job.

He and his wife occupied the flat across the landing from Jennie and old Mrs Forsyth, her grandmother, in the quiet tenement in Shawlands.

Jennie's father had died fourteen years ago and her mother had not very long survived him. Old Mrs Forsyth had shown courage and determination when she had taken charge of the little girl who had now grown up to be a credit to her.

Mr Paterson shook his head slightly as he looked at her now, her head bent over her work. She was far too young to know how to cope with a man like Roger Grant.

His eyes darkened as he thought of the young man who had already caused him a lot of trouble with the staff. He was young, of course, and very spoiled. The girls seemed incapable of resisting his charm.

He looked across the office to where his invoice typist, Margaret Blair, was sitting. She had been one of Roger's interests for a time. But Margaret was a very different proposition, and had been well able to take care of herself.

Robert Paterson wondered whether he ought to have a word with Margaret. Should he ask her to speak to Jennie and give her a friendly warning? But it really wasn't his business and he was reluctant to interfere. It was a tricky problem. Now if it had only been Mr Donald . . .

His kindly eyes were warmer as he thought of Mr Grant's second son, a tall, gentle-looking young man with a shy smile. Of course, he hadn't a look in when Roger was about, with his dashing air of assurance and his dark good looks. Moreover, Donald was lame and very sensitive about his inability to get about as easily as other young people.

Mr Paterson sighed as he turned his attention to the ledger in front of him. He had better keep his own counsel and hope Jennie had her head screwed on the right way.

JUST before half-past five, when Jennie was completing her work for the day, Margaret Blair came over to her desk.

"Are you looking forward to the dance, Jennie? It should be very good."

Margaret saw the quick surge of colour to Jennie's cheeks. So he had asked her!

"Tom and I are having a taxi," Margaret added quickly. "Since we live near each other, I thought you might like us to pick you up."

"It's very kind of you to suggest it, Margaret," Jennie's voice shook a little. She would have to tell Margaret now and the word would get round the place in no time. "Roger's taking me. It's very good of him. I think—" she hesitated and went on haltingly. "I think it's because I haven't been to one of the dances before."

Margaret's lips tightened. So he was going to start on Jennie!

"Yes." Margaret's tone was dry. "Oh well, it can't be helped. But if you change your mind, Jennie, even at the last minute, you are very welcome to join us."

As she sat on the bus taking her home, Jennie thought of Margaret's words. What had she been getting at? Although she was very friendly, Margaret had by no means sought out her company.

There was something about it that she couldn't understand. Was Margaret trying to warn her about Roger? Surely that was ridiculous! Margaret was always pleasant and polite to him. Surely she wasn't jealous?

Mr Paterson, too, had been a little strange when she had taken some work into him in the late afternoon. He had made a passing reference to the dance and had said he was sorry he wasn't going, otherwise he could have brought her home himself.

Jennie shrugged her shoulders and gave herself up to the dream of the dance itself.

What would she wear? Her old pink dress was hardly good enough. She wished, suddenly, that she had a proper evening dress. Something fragile and glamorous that would make Roger proud of her.

Suddenly her heart swelled with happiness. How lucky she was to be going with him. What did it matter if her dress wasn't new? Roger had asked her to go with him. He liked her as she was and that was the main thing.

Jennie got off the bus and hurried along the quiet street. Wait till Grannie heard the news!

She burst into the little kitchen and threw her arms round old Mrs Forsyth's neck.

"Gran! You'll never guess! Roger Grant, Mr Grant's son, has asked me to go to the staff dance with him on Friday. Fancy, Gran! He's asked me! Oh, I'm so happy. He's very nice. You'll like him. He's calling for me here, with the car."

Old Mrs Forsyth looked at Jennie, her faded eyes glowing fondly.

"What will you wear, Jennie?" Mrs Forsyth knew that Jennie really

should have had a new dress for the dance. But it was quite a struggle to keep them going as it was.

"I'll wear my pink dress. None of the people in the office have seen it before. It's lovely material and I think it suits me."

Her grannie looked at her gently. How like Mary she was! A shadow crossed her eyes as she thought of her daughter. How proud she would have been if she could see how well her daughter looked now!

Jennie ate her meal with a young, healthy appetite. She kept looking up at the old woman, smiling happily, for her mind was still on the dance. Her grandmother hoped it would fulfil all her young dreams.

LATER that evening, while Jennie was out, Mrs Forsyth thought about the dress again. This dance meant a lot to Jennie and she was worried about her going in her old dress. She wanted her to look her best and be as smart as the other girls.

She thought of the box lying in the bottom drawer of the old-fashioned chest of drawers. There was a pound or two in it, saved over the years for use in an emergency. Maybe she could use some of the money now. After all, it was Jennie's first dance, a milestone in any young girl's life.

Mrs Forsyth nodded slowly. That was it! She would go into Glasgow in the morning and have a look round the shops. Maybe she would find something suitable that wasn't too dear.

She smiled to herself as she thought of the surprise Jennie would get, and her old heart beat a little faster.

The following morning, when she had seen Jessie off to the office, Mrs Forsyth tidied the small house and got ready for her trip into town.

She got off the tram and made her way along busy Argyle Street, her handbag clutched tightly in her hand.

For a while she contented herself with merely looking in the windows of the big shops.

Eventually, summoning up her courage, she stepped into a big, brightly-lit store. The trip to the gown department in the lift was an experience she didn't enjoy, but the stairs would have been too much for her.

To her relief, a plain, middle-aged woman, with a kindly smile, came towards her when she stepped out of the lift. She had been a little afraid it might have been one of those sleek young women who rather awed her.

The woman listened to Mrs Forsyth quietly, summing up the position quickly. None of the new models would be any use here, she knew, quite apart from the price. But what about the few dresses that were left over from the summer sale? Admittedly none of them was terribly smart, but there was a blue one which was a good buy.

Mrs Forsyth sat down in the small fitting-room easing her tired feet while the woman went off for the dresses.

In a short time she returned and held up the blue dress for Mrs Forsyth's inspection.

A pleased smile lit up the old woman's face as she looked at the dress. It might have been a shorter, more modern replica of the one she had worn herself over fifty years ago when Tom had asked her to marry him.

Gently she handled the soft material, admiring the neat neckline and the soft folds of the wide skirt. The little cap sleeves were dainty and youth-

ful, and the soft full-blown rose tucked into the wide sash looked, to her old eyes, almost real. With scarcely a glance at the other dresses, she told the assistant that this was the one. The price was just right and she was able to hand over the money without hesitation.

All the way home, holding her large parcel carefully, her eyes glowed as she thought of Jennie's surprise when she arrived home from the office.

Now her granddaughter could go to the dance looking her best. Mrs Forsyth sighed contentedly. The money had been well spent.

WHEN Jennie came home that night, old Mrs Forsyth was in a high pitch of excitement. She had looked at the dress time and time again, and a little doubt had formed in the back of her mind. Would Jennie like it? Or would she think it a bit old-fashioned?

She could hardly contain herself but at last she heard Jennie's key in the lock. As the girl entered the kitchen the old woman's eyes went over to the dress, lying on the bed recessed into the wall.

Jennie took off her coat, then caught sight of her grandmother's expression. Her eyes widened as she saw the dress.

"Grannie!" She went quickly to the bed and picked up it carefully, her expression unbelieving.

"I went into Glasgow today," the old woman smiled. "It's a surprise. You'll be as nice as anyone at the dance now, Jennie. It's almost the same as a dress I loved long ago. Do you like it?"

Looking at the dress she was holding in front of her, Jennie's heart sank. How old-fashioned it looked! And that rose! The material was lovely, but oh, not sleeves! Not in a dance dress.

She looked at her grandmother, who put out her hand to touch the soft material. The look on the old woman's face and the sight of the work-worn hand, caused a pang of remorse to shoot through Jennie. How could she have thought such things about the dress after her grandmother had gone to all this expense and trouble for her.

Her warm heart was touched and she flung her arms round the old woman, fighting back her disappointment.

"It's perfect, Gran! I can't thank you enough. It's such a beautiful colour!"

To please her grandmother, she slipped the dress on. It certainly fitted her perfectly, and as she brushed her hair back and put on her dark blue sandals, she was pleasantly surprised at the result. If only it didn't look quite so old-fashioned!

"You look lovely, Jennie." Mrs Forsyth's voice was quiet and happy. "You'll be the belle of the ball."

The rest of the week seemed to fly past and Jennie, busier than ever in the office, saw very little of Roger.

Then it happened. On Thursday, coming back a little early from the cafe where she had her lunch, Jennie was going into the empty cloak-room with her coat, when she overheard a heated argument coming from Mr Grant's private room. The voices were those of Roger and his younger brother, Donald.

"I won't do it!" Donald was declaring firmly. "Tell her yourself. You asked her to the dance. You get out of it."

Almost without realising it, Jennie found herself rooted to the spot, overhearing every single word of the conversation.

"I didn't know that Mr Allison and Patricia were coming," Roger was shouting. "What can I do? I must look after Pat! I thought they would still be in London. Donald——" His tone was softer, wheedling. "You speak to Jennie. Ask her to go with you. She's a nice kid, pretty too."



"I'm telling you for the last time. I won't do it!"

The sound of the office door opening brought Jennie back to reality, and with burning cheeks she made her way over to her desk.

The rest of the scene burned through her mind. Roger's excuses, his embarrassment, the interest of the rest of the office as he leaned over her desk, whispering. Her quiet, toneless voice answering him.

"It doesn't matter. Please don't think about it."

The shame, the humiliation, the desire never to see him again. Jennie wouldn't go to the dance now.

Then she remembered the dress, and her grandmother's trouble and

expense, to say nothing of her kindness. She would have to go after all. How could she explain and let her down?

If her grandmother guessed by Jennie's manner that night that the bottom had fallen out of her dreams, she kept her thoughts to herself. Jennie had spoken to Margaret, who had promised that she and Tom would call for her.

Jennie had merely told her grandmother that her plans were changed and the old woman was wise enough not to probe too deeply. She knew Jennie would tell her in her own time.

JENNIE arrived at the dance with Margaret and Tom, her heart heavy and her expression listless. If only the dance were over. If only she didn't have to watch Roger dancing with Patricia Allison.

"Would you care for an ice or a cup of tea?"

Jennie was sitting alone while Margaret and Tom danced, and she looked up at Donald Grant with surprise.

"I'm sorry I can't ask you to dance." He patted his leg ruefully. "I'm not much good on the dance floor."

Jennie looked at him gratefully.

"Thank you. I'd love a cup of tea."

She took his arm and he led her to the buffet. She watched him as he ordered their tea, and her heart warmed to him. He brought back a tray and placed it on the low table in front of them.

"I hope you're enjoying yourself, Jennie," he smiled. He saw her expression and continued: "Look, it's no good pretending. I know what's happened. I'm very sorry. But don't be too hard on Roger. He got himself in rather a spot. But he means no harm. I hope it won't spoil your evening."

"I'm sure it won't. As a matter of fact I'm quite enjoying myself."

Jennie was surprised to find that it was true. Something in Donald's quiet manner had given her back her pride.

"I hardly know Roger. It would be silly to be upset about it."

Her dignity impressed Donald and he thought how sweet she looked in her simple blue dress. As though she were reading his thoughts she spoke again.

"I very nearly didn't come to the dance, you know. But my Grannie bought me this dress as a surprise. I couldn't have hurt her like that."

"It's a lovely dress." Donald touched the soft material gently. "In fact—" He coloured slightly. "There's not a girl in the room to compare with you."

He was obviously sincere and Jennie smiled.

"It's very nice of you to say that," she told him.

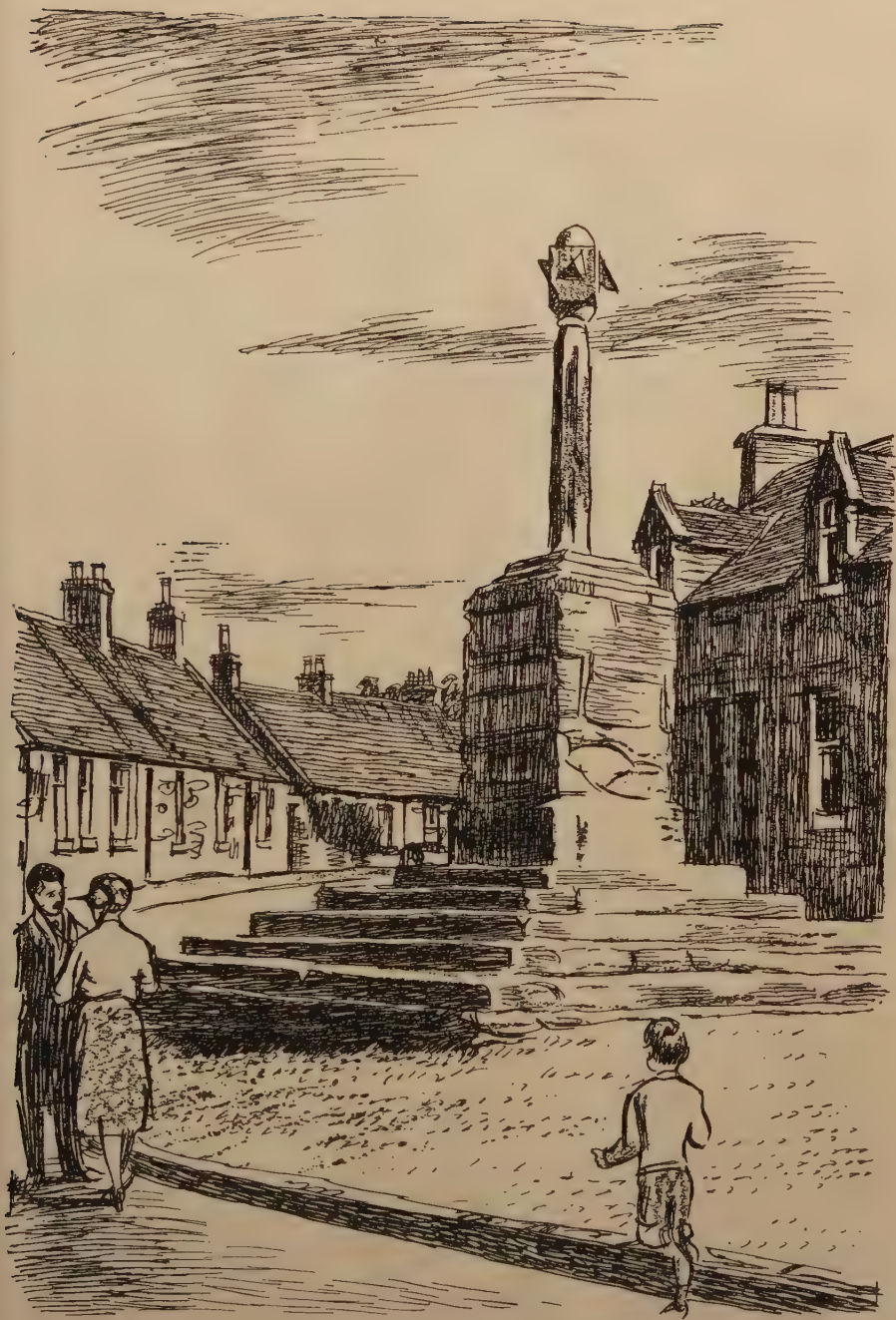
Donald sighed regretfully.

"I suppose I ought to take you back to the hall now, Jennie. I expect you want to dance. If I could dance I'd ask you for every dance this evening. But I can't ask a girl to spend her time sitting talking to me."

Jennie noticed the faint look of appeal in his grey eyes.

"Yes, you can, Donald. You can ask me, and I'll be glad to."

From the ballroom came the strains of a slow dreamy waltz, but neither Jennie nor Donald heard it. Their heads were close together as they sat finding their happiness in each other's company.



Pencaitland

J. Campbell Kerr

OUT OF SIGHT

by
Alison
Carr



IT was a wild and windy March day when David Morgan came home in triumph to his native Welsh town of Llandonwy.

But despite the weather the town band turned out in strength to meet the train at the station. Two tall miners carried the local boy who had made good shoulder-high up Main Street to the strains of "See The Conquering Hero Comes" and "Men Of Harlech."

Flowers and gay bunting flapped and fluttered above their heads. From sidewalks and windows along the street came cries of "Well done, David bach," and "Welcome home, lad."

On his precarious perch, David smiled and nodded. He clasped his hands above his head in boxer-fashion, wishing it was all over and he was somewhere quiet and peaceful.

But there was another thought that kept biting into his mind. Where was Gwylim Jones hiding herself? Nowhere in all that sea of faces could he find one that even remotely resembled hers.

Wasn't she the one he had come back for? Wasn't the thought of her the star that had guided him to his success?

"A great musician I'll be," he'd told her the day he left home. "And when I sit at a piano or an organ it is your face that will be in front of me. The music I play will be just myself telling the whole world what you mean to me."

Her reply had been one that troubled David Morgan for a long time afterwards. It was so unlike what he had expected.

"David bach, there is only one thing I want. Always I am only Gwylim Jones, daughter of Ivor Jones, butcher. I don't want you raising me up on any fancy pedestals."

GWYLIM'S words had hit David like a jet of cold water. But it would have taken more than words to put out the fire of ambition in David Morgan. Long ago something inside himself had told him that music was to be his life.

But knowing that, and telling it to another without seeming to boast, were two very different things. When he had tried to explain to Gwylim, she just looked at him as if he was talking about some rival for her place in his heart.

"You are a very good engineer, David," she said. "I would be happy to be the wife of a good engineer, especially one who could teach music in the evenings and play the church organ on Sundays."

"I'm not living as an engineer by day and a piano-strummer at night," he protested. "It's music has the hold of me. When that happens it's not something you can lock away in a drawer till the day's work is done. It must fill the whole of a life the way it is with me."

"Then there is no room in that life for me, David. I have seen it all before. You will know what I mean if you remember my uncle."

There it was out in the light at last, the nut and kernel of her fear and anger. David had never met Thomas Williams, but he had heard about him.

Thomas Williams sang well enough to win medals at Eistedfodds up and down the country while his wife had to work hard to keep her family in food and clothes. He had a Welsh harp he strummed to his own singing. That harp was dearer to him than any living creature, even his own family.

The People's Friend Annual

One day Mrs Williams had to sell the harp to pay the rent. The next morning her husband marched out of his house and down the long, dusty road of Llandonwy Valley. He was never seen again.

When Gwylim brought up her uncle's name and threw it in David's teeth, it was too much. It showed a lack of tact and understanding.

David remembered the pain her words made in his heart, remembered the way his tongue tripped and trembled in trying to answer her.

"Do you think I could put music or anything else before you, Gwylim? Music is only another way I have of saying how I love you."

THE procession was passing the great stone church now. On Sunday he was to play the organ there with the choir singing "Jerusalem".

It was the highest honour the little Welsh town could pay him and David was deeply conscious of it.

But still he could see no sign of Gwylim. If she'd been there he would have seen her.

Wearily he admitted to himself that he hadn't convinced Gwylim of his love and promises of security.

When he got the offer of his orchestral appointment in London, she had seemed harder to reach than ever.

"I'm glad you have got what you wanted, David. Llandonwy will be like an empty house to me after you are gone. But I will get used to it."

It was then he had made his biggest mistake.

"It won't be for long. When I've made enough money we can get married. We'll get a nice house or a flat in London."

Gwylim shook her head.

"No David. If I marry you—and we're not even engaged yet—we will stay here in Llandonwy, not in London!"

"But from now on my career will be in London. How can I stay here? You must be reasonable."

"That's what I'm trying to be. Aren't there enough lonely people in London already without me adding to them! There's work for you here in Llandonwy."

"Aye, and plenty of mud to stick in for the rest of my life, till I'm bogged down and too old to struggle out of it. Is that the sort of future you are wishing on me, Gwylim!"

"I am not wishing anything on you. If this thing is stronger than your love for me, then you must go to London and try to forget me. Already you are beginning to behave like my uncle and it makes me afraid. Good-bye and God bless you, David."

David went to London a fortnight after that meeting. Gwylim ran down to the station at the last minute to call out good luck to him. It was a last gesture that buoyed him up with sudden hope and he clung to it for two long years.

During that time he wrote letters to her, full of his future plans and modestly announcing his successes. Gwylim replied regularly. But their letters were those of two good friends rather than of young folk in love. They did nothing to heal the breach.

With a start David brought his thoughts back to the present. The procession was coming to a halt in front of the Town Hall where his reception

was being told. He was lowered from the lady porch to make his way through a cheering crowd to the platform.

Then he made a short heartfelt speech of thanks, saying how glad he was to be back home, if only for a short time. But all the time his eyes were ranging over the big crowd, searching in vain for the one person who meant more to him than anyone else.

AT the other end of the town Mrs Jones closed up her butcher's shop and went upstairs to bed. Halfway through the night he stopped eating and studied his daughter over the table.

"A great welcome it was for David Morgan at the station today," he said. "I've not seen the like in the streets of Llandonwy for many a long year."

"Yes, Father. I saw it all from the window."

Mr Jones stirred uneasily in his chair, aware of a sudden tension in the living-room.

"David kept looking about him as if he was seeking someone," he said vaguely. "Someone he had expected to be there and who wasn't."

Gwyneth laid down her knife and fork very deliberately.

"Why don't you ask me why I didn't go to welcome David? It's not like you to go looking about the town," she said.

"If you don't want to talk about it, I don't want to press you. I only thought it looked very strange with you and young David being such close friends before he went to London."

"You know how we were more than close friends. Swathencro was more the name for it. He wanted to marry me."

"Wanted to marry you, did he? And your poor old father was not to know until he got invited to the wedding. Is that it?"

The colour rose suddenly in Gwyneth's cheeks.

"I was waiting about a wedding, Father. Because there isn't going to be one. Now are you satisfied?"

Mr Jones gulped down a mouthful of food.

"No, I'm not. Why isn't there going to be a wedding? Did you refuse him?"

"I did! Now, isn't that a terrible thing? Just imagine me refusing the great David Morgan? I suppose I ought to be ashamed of myself. But I'm not!"

Her father lifted his napkin and gently patted his lips, giving himself time to arrange his thoughts.

"It's not a terrible thing if you don't love the man. It was the only thing you could do."

"But I do love David. If it was only love that was wanted, I have enough to marry him ten times over."

Mr Jones gazed at her in wonder.

"You're out of my depth now. In my young days it was love that took a man and a girl to the altar. Nothing else. What does David think of all this?"

"He thinks I should be ready to pack and go to London the minute he raises his finger."

"London is where his work will be, my dear. David Morgan is too big a man for Llandonwy now."

The People's Friend Annual

"Then he's also too big a man for me. I don't want to go to London."

MR JONES was silent for a while. When he spoke it was in a new tone of voice.

"If you're taking this attitude on account of me, I want you to know that I can very well look after myself."

"It's not on account of you, Father, though I would miss you terribly. It's because David has—has changed!"

"We all change, my dear. Changing all the time, from day to day, from minute to minute."

"You don't understand me, Father. We are talking about two different things. David's change is too deep down for me to reach. All he thinks of nowadays is getting on, and leaving folk like you and me far behind."

"All right, all right, I won't argue with you," her father said softly. "It's your life after all. Too many parents try to live their children's lives for them. Only I still say you are wrong about David Morgan."

"Well, half the town would agree with you there," Gwylim replied with a trace of bitterness. "The way they are carrying on you think he was Beethoven and Schubert rolled into one. Why, even the organ had to be electrified before he could be asked to play it."

"Now, now, you can't blame him for that, my dear. The committee have been talking about getting that organ electrified for a long time now, only they were waiting for old Taffy Davies to retire from blowing it by hand."

Unwittingly Ivor Jones had presented his daughter with another point.

"And now I suppose everyone has forgotten poor old Mr Davies. He has pumped that organ for over fifty years, three times every Sunday. But now when the great Mr Morgan comes to play, Mr Davies isn't good enough."

"It's not that way at all, and well you know it," her father replied. "Taffy Davies would be retiring in another week or two anyway. The organ committee thought it wouldn't be fair to either David or Taffy to expect him to blow his way through 'Jerusalem.'"

"He has done it before and I never heard any complaints. You know as well as I do that Taffy is going to be terribly hurt about this."

"Yes, you are right enough there, Gwylim, though he's trying hard not to show it. Only what else could the committee do? There are going to be important people in church tomorrow and the committee couldn't take any risks of the organ stopping for want of wind in the middle of the recital, could they?"

"I suppose not. It just seems a great pity that an old man who has given faithful service for so long should be hurt because some high-up people can be useful to David Morgan."

Her father rose abruptly from the table.

"I'd better go back down to the shop before I fall out with you for the first time in your life, Gwylim."

As the door slammed behind him, Gwylim burst into tears. Throwing herself on the sofa, she cried until she felt weak and spent. A few minutes later David Morgan's knock sounded on the door, but she was in no fit state to answer it.

The knock came again, and she sat up huddled on the sofa, hardly daring to breathe.

Still she did not answer, although every nerve in her body seemed to be fighting against her will, and urging her to open the door.

"Gwylim, I know you are in there because your father told me. Please open the door," David called.

At last she found her voice.

"No! Go away, David. Please go away. I—I don't feel very well."

"If I go away now, will you see me tomorrow at church? Will you promise to wait for me after the service?"

"Yes, yes," she said desperately. "Only please go away now, David."

The footsteps on the stairway receded. Suddenly Gwylim wanted to run after him, to throw herself into his arms and tell him she loved him.

Instead, she ran to the front window and caught a glimpse of him striding down the street, his broad back and straight shoulders advertising his anger. Or could it be a sudden cold indifference?

DOWN the long street David marched, his mind in a whirl.

What had come over Gwylim to make her behave like this? Was she jealous of his success in London? Did she envy him his ability to move people by his playing?

It couldn't be that. Gwylim had always been so proud of the things he did—prouder than he was himself—until recently.

It was only when he told her he intended giving up engineering and becoming a full-time musician that she started to behave in this strange manner.

Didn't she know he was doing all this for her as well as for himself? Didn't she realise that, without her, nothing would be worthwhile?

Why couldn't Gwylim see that? What was she afraid of?

At last he felt like giving it up. What was the use? There was no end to the questions that buzzed through his mind.

At that point David looked up and saw he was almost abreast of the iron gateway leading to the church.

Passing through the open gates, he walked up the long drive to the church and slipped inside.

The peace of the old building seemed to fold around him, soothing his worried mind.

Slowly he walked down the centre aisle to the organ, built into the wall just short of the chancel steps. Behind the keyboard the huge grey pipes rose and lost themselves in the shadows under the roof. David remembered how, as a small boy, he had imagined that the music in the pipes was a hidden choir of angels singing behind the organ.

BUT were his eyes playing him tricks? Was there a dim gleam of light coming from the back, through the spaces between the organ-pipes?

He had heard some talk of the organ having been reconditioned and tuned for his performance the following day. Perhaps some of the men were working overtime to complete it.

Thinking it would do no harm to peep in, he slipped through a small side-door to the bellows-chamber behind the organ.

The People's Friend Annual

In the centre of the small space an electric bulb hung down from an overhead beam. Under it a dejected figure was sitting on a box.

"Mr Davies!" David said in surprise. "What are you doing here on a Saturday evening?"

The old man looked up, his eyes dull and lifeless.

"Hullo, David bach. I thought I'd come in to take a last look round."

David noticed then that the old man's hands were resting on the long wooden pump-handle he had worked every Sunday for over half a century.

With difficulty David took his eyes away from those gnarled and wrinkled hands, and from the bowed dejection of the old man's body.

A lump rose suddenly in his throat and a mist swam before his eyes.

"You love this old organ, don't you, Mr Davies?"

Taffy Davies nodded wearily.

"It has been part of my life. There was a time when I thought I might one day sit out there on the high stool and make music sweeter than Llandonwy Valley had ever heard. It was very vain of me, and the organ itself taught me my first great lesson in humility. It convinced me I would never make music, so I turned my mind and my hands to the next best thing. I took over the job of pumping the bellows. It gave me a feeling that at least I was helping others to make the music I could not make myself. I was still a part of it all, but that is finished now——"

David tried to find something to say. Something that would compensate for this old man's sense of loss and make him feel wanted and useful again. But his mind was a blank.

"I—I suppose the electricity is installed now," he said finally. Even to himself his words sounded cruel and thoughtless. "I—I mean——"

"Yes, it is all ready to be switched on," the old man replied in a tired voice.

His hands dropped from the shaft of the pump and hung helplessly at his sides.

"At least you will be sure of getting enough wind in the bellows to carry you through the whole anthem. Maybe, all things considered, it is just as well."

SUDDENLY a gleam of light came through the darkness and showed David the truth. This old man, who had served the organ so faithfully for all those years, was due to retire in a few weeks. But he had been hoping and praying silently for one last chance to pump the organ for an occasion like the one tomorrow.

To finish his long term of service by blowing the organ for such a work as "Jerusalem" would give him something to remember in the years ahead.

A look of decision came to David's face as he turned to the old man.

"That's just what I'm not sure of, Mr Davies. I mean, that I'll get enough wind, that I can rely on the electric motor to see me through the anthem. If only I could be sure of some other source of wind if anything did go wrong, I'd be quite happy."

"Aye, maybe. But there is no other source as you call it, except——"

The old man looked down at his hands.

"I can see you've got it," David said with a note of relief in his voice.

"Now, if you would be good enough, Mr Davies, to be here standing by just in case anything happened, I would be a lot happier."

The old man looked at him doubtfully. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll do it if it will help you, David. But nothing will go wrong with that electric motor."

"Thank you, Mr Davies. You've taken a great load off my mind," said David.

Together they walked out of the big stone church and down the long path to the iron gate. Two men who felt easier in their minds and happier in their



hearts than they had done when entering the church such a short time before.

The following day the old church was packed. Some people were even perched on window-sills.

Oblivious to them all, David played as he had never played before.

Even Gwylim, in her place in the choir, forgot all her worries and fears in the glory of such music. For the first time she began to see what a terrible thing it might be if she persuaded David to return to his engineering.

The service ended, and the music of the organ stopped at last.

Gwylim walked over and laid her hand on David's shoulder. He turned and looked up at her.

The People's Friend Annual

"Gwymlim!" he said, his voice tender. "I'm glad you came."

"I'm glad I came too. It was wonderful. I have never heard such playing."

"If you had not been here I could not have done it. And before I forget, there is someone else I have to thank too."

He took her hand and she followed him through the small door leading into the organ chamber. There she saw Taffy Davies. The old man was sitting beside the big wooden pump-shaft, his hands still gripping it.

"Mr Davies!" she said. "I—I thought it was done by electricity."

"It was meant to be, Gwymlim," the old man explained. "But it broke down. As luck would have it, David asked me to be here standing by."

Tears came into the old man's eyes.

"It has been the most wonderful day in all the fifty years I have served the organ," he said in a muffled voice. "I will never do it again, David. But today has crowned my life. I am a happy man."

He groped his way to the small wooden door and went out.

As the two young people were about to follow, David suddenly patted something in his jacket pocket and turned back.

"Just a moment, Gwymlim. I'd better not forget this."

From his pocket he took an electric fuse in its porcelain container. Walking over to the fuse-box of the organ motor, he opened it and fitted in the fuse.

"So the motor didn't break down at all, David," Gwymlim said softly.

As they walked together down the long path to the church gate, Gwymlim looked up into David's face.

"Do you know, David, when you took that fuse out of your pocket, it changed our whole future? If it hadn't been for that, and what you did for Taffy Davies, I—I'm afraid to think what a fool I would have been."

David smiled down at her.

"I've something here in another pocket that might confirm what you have just said, darling. Here it is."

Next moment the engagement ring was on Gwymlim's finger and she was in David's arms. And all around there seemed to be music played softly and sweetly for them alone.



Where waters skip and tumble across the barren moor.

"Call Again!"



by
Anne Murray

SOME of the bus conductors on the Number Fifty-Seven route don't seem to have a word to say to their passengers. Perhaps they will murmur "Thank you" when a fare is tendered. But it is clear they haven't much interest in the folk who travel with them.

Others, of course, are just the very opposite. They seem to have a word for everyone. It may only be a comment on the weather, or a bit of chaff with someone. Or sometimes an old person is helped into a seat with friendly and encouraging remarks.

The People's Friend Annual

Then there are the conductors who keep using some little phrase most of the time. It may be "Fares, please," or "Any more fares?" or perhaps a "Cheerio" to the alighting passengers.

Or, "Call again!" One conductor says this quite often to passengers waiting on the platform as the bus jolts to a halt.

Sandy Thomson is such a friendly person that you feel he really wants you to come back and take another trip on his bus! He is a red-haired young man, with nice grey eyes and a pleasant smile.

Even the most tiresome passengers never make him lose his temper. When he has to say: "Move up the bus, please," he is always good-natured to the people who keep trying to stand near the door. It's because he is that sort of person that folk find themselves getting help from him at times—even if he never knows a thing about it.

Last Monday morning, for instance, it was just by saying: "Call again!" that things came right for three people who got off his bus feeling really heavy-hearted. You wonder how that happened?

Well, for a beginning, there was Miss Berridge, who got on the bus at the eastern terminus.

Winter was a depressing time, thought Miss Berridge as the bus began to move. It was depressing, anyway, if you lived alone and had no one in the world to care about you.

Miss Berridge sighed as she thought of her long years of service, mostly to old people. Her last post had been that of matron in an eventide home. But she was no longer able for such exacting work, and so she had come to live in quiet lodgings at this end of the town.

"**F**ARES please," came a patient voice from the left, startling her. She was so wrapped up in her thoughts that she had not noticed the conductor's approach. Hastily fumbling in her purse, she brought out her sixpence.

"And how are you today?" Sandy Thompson asked genially.

"Quite well, thank you," replied Miss Berridge with a faint smile. She could hardly tell a bus conductor she was feeling lonely and depressed!

"It looks as if the sun will get through later," said Sandy, with an optimistic glance outside. "But the pavements in town are slippery after the frost. You'll need to watch out."

As he moved away Miss Berridge frowned. She hated frosty pavements. Elderly people so often had falls, and had to be taken to hospital with a broken leg or arm.

Supposing that happened to her? How terrible it would be. Yet would it be worse than sitting alone in her tidy lodgings day after day, wondering how to pass the time? What was she doing today but trying to pass the time by going into the centre of the town?

Once there, she would wander about the shops for a while, perhaps have a solitary coffee and then take the bus home.

She sighed as she noticed the bus was turning into the main part of the town. It was time she got off, for the sixpenny fare took her no farther.

Carefully Sandy helped her down, then out came his usual farewell remark. "Call again!"

Miss Berridge smiled at him. He was rather a kind young man, she decided.

But as she moved slowly along the busy pavement, Miss Berridge found herself wondering where she had heard those words before.

All at once she remembered. It was that pleasant young woman who lived in a bungalow near the terminus, and who had been so kind to her the day she felt faint while walking down the road.

What had her name been? Miss Berridge struggled to remember. Oh yes, Mrs Fleming. She had asked her into the house to sit down for a little while to rest. Later she had offered to see her home.

But Miss Berridge soon felt all right again, and she had no wish to trouble anyone—especially a busy housewife like Mrs Fleming. There were two small children running about, and a baby sleeping in a pram. An old granny lived there too, it seemed.

Yet, busy as she was, Mrs Fleming had been reluctant to let her go off alone. She had walked to the gate with Miss Berridge.

"Do call again next time you are passing," she had said.

BUT Miss Berridge had not called. She had even avoided that road, so that she had not encountered Mrs Fleming again. Young housewives did not want dull, elderly women pushing into their lives.

In any case, she was too old to start making new friends. Yet, as she window-shopped, Miss Berridge's conscience began to prick her a little. Perhaps she should have called in, just once.

Gradually she came to the conclusion she had been ungracious. "Do call again," Mrs Fleming had said.

"And I'll go now, before I can change my mind," decided Miss Berridge.

She crossed the street and waited for the bus to take her back the way she had come. It would be eleven o'clock by the time she reached Mrs Fleming's house.

Presently Miss Berridge found herself standing at the front door of the bungalow. For a moment she hesitated. Then she put a finger on the bell. As she did so, the sound of a vehicle drawing up at the gate made her look round. A taxi stood there.

Was someone arriving? No, it was empty. Then someone must be going out. What an awkward moment for her call! Miss Berridge longed to slip away before being seen. But the door of the house opened suddenly and Mrs Fleming looked out.

Her face wore a worried expression, then all at once it cleared.

"Do come in!" she exclaimed. "Have you a moment to spare? I'm delighted to see you, but if only you knew how I need someone to help me!"

The day seemed suddenly brighter to Miss Berridge. Someone actually needed her help. No one had asked for it since she retired.

"My husband's in the navy," explained Mrs Fleming, "and he's due home today after a whole year away. I promised to take the children down to the station to meet him, and his train arrives in twenty minutes. I've ordered a taxi but it isn't here yet."

"It's at the gate," Miss Berridge put in.

"Is it? That's fine. But the friend who was coming to look after Granny has phoned to say she's not well. Both my neighbours are out and I couldn't think what to do. If you could possibly stay in the house till we get back, I'd be so grateful. Or is that asking too much?"

The People's Friend Annual

"I'll be delighted," Miss Berridge replied.

She followed Mrs Fleming through to a pleasant little bedroom where an old lady lay comfortably propped up on pillows.

Mrs Fleming introduced them.

"You remember, Miss Berridge rested in the house for a little one day a while ago," she told the old lady.

After a moment of excitement as the children were gathered and put into coats, there was a slam of the door and then silence.

"And how are you keeping?" asked Mrs Baker. "It's terrible weather just now, isn't it. I just stay in my bed, for the cold makes my rheumatics much worse."

To be with someone so much older than herself made Mrs Berridge feel almost young. Time flew by, and presently the family came back, accompanied now by their father, a handsome man in naval uniform.

Mrs Baker accepted a kiss from her grandson. "So you're home again for a while," she remarked. "And now I suppose you and Jean will be wanting to go out all the time?"

"Now, Granny, I'm only just home," grinned Bob Fleming.

"It'll not matter," said Mrs Baker with satisfaction. "Miss Berridge here will keep me company sometimes, won't you, dear?"

"I'll be only too glad," said Miss Berridge.

Later, after accepting a cup of coffee, and thoroughly enjoying this little change from routine, she was able to convince Mrs Fleming that she really would enjoy coming to visit the old lady.

"It would be such a help," Mrs Fleming told her earnestly. "Granny has taken to you, and she's been quite difficult with some of the friends who have come in. You seem to understand someone like her. But I'm afraid I did rather rush you into it today. Please forgive me!"

"Don't be silly," was Miss Berridge's embarrassed reply. But as she walked the short distance home, all her depression had vanished.

"And this has happened because that conductor said 'Call again!'" remembered Miss Berridge. She thought of Sandy Thompson approvingly. Next time she travelled on his bus she would smile and try to show that she appreciated his friendliness.

NOR was Miss Berridge the only one to appreciate Sandy that morning. After she left the bus her seat had been taken by another unhappy-looking person. He was a thin young man, wearing a minister's collar. As he too, looked out at the wintry scene, Norman West told himself he had failed with the family he had tried so hard to help.

It was more disheartening than anything that had happened since he had taken up his first charge as minister of the church in the dock area.

He had looked on the Patersons as typical of the folk he had to bring into the church.

The two girls had joined the choir and the smaller children were sent to the Sunday school. Mrs Paterson had begun to come occasionally to the church, and on one memorable evening Joe Paterson himself had turned up at a service.

Norman had rejoiced and felt his efforts were well worth while. Then

suddenly a change came. Joe Paterson got into trouble with the police and now he was serving a sentence in prison.

From that moment the door of the tenement home had been closed to the church and the minister.

Mrs Paterson had explained it all too plainly the last time Norman had called.

“What’s the use of you and your church? It didn’t keep my man out of prison!” she said indignantly, dashing tears away with a work-worn hand.

She had gone in and slammed the door. All that Norman had been able to do since then was to pay Joe Paterson a visit in prison.

He found Joe taking it all very calmly.

“Now don’t you bother your head about me, Mr West,” he said cheerfully.

“I’m all right. You can go and see the wife, though, if you like.”

Norman had to tell him then what Mrs Paterson had said.

Joe grinned. “You could always try again. Poor Jess, she’ll be needing a friend.”

Should he go back? Norman shrank from a door shut in his face again. In any case, he had plenty of other visits to make. But now it was time to alight from the bus. He got to his feet.

“This your stop?” asked Sandy, wondering why the minister looked so worried.

“Yes, thank you.”

Norman got down. He looked round to give Sandy a smile of farewell. Sandy smiled back as he rang the bell.

“Call again!” he said.

Norman walked away towards the long rows of tenements. Sandy’s words echoed in his ears. “Call again!” Was that what he should do about the Patersons? Would it be of any use?

He hesitated at the foot of the long stair. Monday morning wasn’t a good time to visit a housewife. But something urged him to go on. He climbed up and knocked on the door.

Mrs Paterson opened it. For a moment she stared, then a wave of colour flooded her face. She held the door wider and motioned him in.

“I never thought you would come back, Mr West,” she said in a troubled tone. “And I never thought you would bother going to see Joe, but he tells me you did. I—I maybe spoke a bit hasty to you the other day.”

It was a handsome apology. Norman’s spirits rose with a bound. He had been right to come back. There might be hard work ahead and difficulties, but this showed he musn’t give up too easily. Taking the chair Mrs Paterson offered, he began to ask after the youngsters.

BUT if things were smoother now for Norman West, there was yet another passenger on Sandy’s bus who seemed to have a lot to worry him. He had got on at the terminus at the west side of the town, and now from the platform Sandy was regarding him rather doubtfully.

Sandy had warned Miss Berridge about the icy pavements, but he felt sure this man should not be venturing out on them either today. He had never seen him before, but probably he was a patient from the convalescent home down this way. Sometimes the patients came out by themselves when they were nearly well.

The People's Friend Annual

But this man did not look nearly well. It had been quite a job to get him on to the bus, with a leg in plaster and crutches as well.

"All the way," said the man rather curtly when Sandy moved forward to give him his ticket. Then he added: "Do you have returns? I may stay on the bus for two or three runs."

Sandy's grey eyes widened.

"You mean, just go up and down?"

"Any objections?"

"No, it'll be all right. But I'm afraid you'll have to take a new fare every time," Sandy explained.

The man nodded, accepted his ticket and turned his head to gaze through the window.

Sandy went back to the platform and eyed him with fresh doubt.

From his seat near the door Martin Jameson was already changing his mind. It would be better to get off in the centre of the town and go somewhere for lunch. He was supposed to be doing that anyway. But all he wanted was to be away from the home when the two o'clock visiting hour came along.

The doctor had given him permission to try going about by himself. It was time he began. The crash had happened months ago, and he still had to use crutches. They said that would stop before long, but his leg still felt pretty weak.

And his face! Martin frowned as he thought of the sight that it was. His mirror told him, even though Irene Forbes had said yesterday that she hardly noticed his scars.

It had been wonderful to see Irene again. Only by a great effort had he kept himself from making the proposal he had been going to make long ago. But Irene had gone to visit relatives in New Zealand and while she was away the car accident had occurred. Now she had come to see him the very day after she had returned.

But he musn't see her again. Tonight he would write and explain. A man who was forced to use crutches wasn't entitled to think of a lovely girl like Irene.

His face set in determined lines as he considered what to do. The best way to deal with today seemed to be to keep out of the home until after the visiting hour. At first he had meant just to sit in the bus.

Remembering the conductor's surprise, however, he decided against the idea. He would get off and have lunch in the town somewhere.

"Are you wanting off here?" Sandy asked, as Martin began to struggle to his feet.

"Yes, I'll get off now," Martin replied. Sandy helped him off the bus and handed him his crutches.

"All right now?" Sandy asked. "Look after yourself. Call again," he grinned as the bus moved off once more.

MARTIN went slowly along the street. He remembered what Irene had said yesterday as she left.

"I'll call again tomorrow," she had promised. "We haven't begun to talk yet. An hour's far too short."

She had given him a delightful kiss and left him feeling on top of the

world. But the feeling had only lasted until he had to reach for his crutches again.

Now the conductor's remark had made him think of her promise, and the look in her eyes as she made it.

Suppose he went back to the home right away? He would be there before Irene arrived.

After all, even if he did propose, Irene might not accept him. Yes, he would leave it at that, decided Martin, inwardly well aware of what Irene's answer would be.

And perhaps if she loved him she really did not see his face as being much the worse.

Suddenly happy once more, Martin smiled to himself as he signalled a passing taxi.

"I won't take a bus. It might be the same conductor," he thought. "And he obviously thinks I'm daft as it is! All the same, I'm glad he said 'Call again,' for that's just what I couldn't let Irene do in vain."

BY now, however, Sandy Thompson was not on the bus at all. He had gone off duty some time ago, and after "paying in" at the depot he was walking the short distance to his home, where his mother would have his dinner waiting.

He was fortunate to have such a capable mother, Sandy often thought. She managed his happy-go-lucky father and her family of five with the greatest of ease and good humour.

Yet sometimes lately Sandy had felt it was time he had a home and a wife of his own. His mother told him that frequently. He had often wished he could meet someone he wanted to marry.

And today, on his last run, something pleasant had happened. Sandy thought about it as he walked along. It had been at the peak of the lunch-hour rush and his bus had been full. But as he struggled past people to collect the new fares, he had become aware of a face he had never seen before, with a pair of blue eyes which laughed back into his own.

She really was a very pretty girl, with soft brown curls. Even though she was being squashed against a seat because the bus was so crowded, she was enjoying it all. Sandy felt an instant response. He smiled to her as he took the half-crown she held out.

"I'm so sorry I haven't change. I only want a threepenny fare," said the girl. Her voice was as nice as her face.

"Now, that's too bad, for I haven't got any change!" Sandy teased.

"Really? I just can't believe it!"

A crowded bus is certainly not the best place for two young people to start up a friendship. There simply wasn't time on this occasion.

"I haven't seen you on this route before," Sandy managed to say as the bus drew up and the pretty girl accepted his steadying hand.

"I started work in a new place just this morning, so I'll be travelling this way often now," Maisie Marshall smiled.

"That's O.K. I'll be seeing you," grinned Sandy.

Leaning from the bus, he returned her farewell wave. Then he called after her that little phrase which had brought happiness to several people that day.

"Call again!"

TOO SPICK AND SPAN!

BY MARGARET KINGSLEY



NO one liked Mrs Wilkie. In a small friendly village like Benlochie she stuck out like a sore thumb, as Jim Stewart was fond of saying.

Jim, the village postie, came up against her more often than others. Mrs Wilkie was always sending for catalogues and leaflets she saw advertised and Jim had to walk all the way up Killick Hill at least once, sometimes twice a day, to deliver them.

Too Spick And Span!

"It's not as if she buys anything in the catalogues," he grumbled one day in the post office.

"I suppose it's one way of breaking the loneliness." Jenny Murdoch was young enough to spare a thought for Mrs Wilkie's life in the small house at the top of the hill. "She doesn't get any letters."

Jim snorted and began sorting the afternoon delivery.

"It's no wonder. With never a kind word for anyone where would she find friends? Her tongue's as sharp as a needle. She gave me a prick with it this morning. The flap of the envelope had slipped out and there was a tear in one corner. It's a fine state of affairs, she said, when one's letters are delivered in such a condition!"

He stopped sorting and groaned, holding up a big, square envelope.

"Another one! And this one's torn too! What have I done to deserve Mrs Wilkie?"

A small, thin man with receding hair and a large moustache, he looked so comical in his dismay that Jenny burst out laughing.

"Cheer up, Mr Stewart. It's all in a day's work."

Jenny was eighteen and hadn't been working long enough to let the small irritations of life get her down. Slim and pretty, with red-gold hair and sparkling blue eyes, she loved meeting and talking to people. Her work in Benlochie's small post office brought her into contact with almost everyone around.

"Maybe." Jim Stewart pulled the strap of his postbag over his head. "But just wait until you come up against Mrs Wilkie yourself. You'll have a different tale to tell then!"

Killick Hill was long and steep and pushing a bicycle up it was no mean feat. Jim eased his bag around to the front, got out Mrs Wilkie's catalogue and went up the narrow path to the front door.

As always, he hoped he might be able to slip it through the letter-box and be away before Mrs Wilkie was aware of his coming. But, as always, it was not to be. The door opened before he could bend to the letter-box.

"Another one torn! This is too much. I'm going to write in about it, Mr Stewart. I don't know whose fault it is, but if it's yours you'll hear about it!"

Martha Wilkie was a big woman. Kindly folk might call her outsize, but she was more than that. Her clothes hung on her shapelessly. For years now she had been forced to wear the only kind of shoes able to bear her weight—flat, broad and sensibly-laced.

Jim Stewart brushed his moustache with one hand while the other pushed his bag to the back of his aching shoulders. His face flushed with sudden anger.

"Write if you want," he declared sharply. "I'm tired of your grumbles, Martha Wilkie! I wish I'd never come to your door again!"

He stumped away as the door slammed behind him.

BACK at the post office, ready to turn in his bag for the day, he told Jenny what had happened.

"Trying to get me into trouble! That's all she's ever done in her life, caused trouble to other folk with her tongue. Why, even her husband——"

The People's Friend Annual

He broke off and bit his lip.

"Mr Wilkie's been dead for years," Jenny said slowly. "He died before I was born, didn't he?"

"Aye." Jim rubbed his chin somewhat ashamedly. "Maybe I shouldn't be talking this way to you, Jenny. It's old gossip now."

"But I'd like to know." Jenny leaned earnestly across the counter. "Everyone dislikes her so much, and she seems to set out deliberately to make herself disliked. There must be a reason for it, Mr Stewart."

"Well——" Jim pushed his hat to the back of his head. "I suppose there's no harm in telling. You see, it was this way. Martha was always a big person, even when she was young."

"The house she lives in is the house where she was born. The land at the back was her father's small holding. When Martha left school she helped her father on the land."

"Was she—was she as sharp-tongued then?"

"Just quiet, I remember. Now I come to think of it, she wasn't bad-looking in a way. If she'd smiled a bit more, been jolly as big folk are supposed to be, things might have been different."

"But she did marry," Jenny prompted him. "Someone did fall in love with her."

JIM hesitated, shifting his feet.

"That's the point. Her father died, then her mother. Martha was all alone, with the house and the land and a comfortable income if she kept the place going."

"Sam Wilkie worked on a farm nearby. He often gave Martha's father a hand in his spare time and he continued to work there at week-ends after his death. He was a good-looking, well-set young man who could have had his pick of the pretty girls in the village. But he began courting Martha seriously. Most folk thought he married her for the small holding."

"Were they happy?"

"It looked so at first, though Martha didn't change much. She still kept to herself up there, but Sam came often into the village. They seemed contented enough and we all began to forget the circumstances of their marriage. Then suddenly there were quarrels. Sam bought a motorbike and spent more and more time away from home. A year to the day they were married he crashed on the road to Abergelvie."

"They weren't able to get Martha to him before he died. But he was able to say that they had had another quarrel before he'd set out. He'd been thinking so much about it he'd gone too fast and taken the bend of the road too wide."

"And since then," Jenny said softly, "Mrs Wilkie's never let anyone get near her because she thought folk blamed her for his death."

The young girl and the middle-aged man looked at each other. Jim Stewart stirred uneasily.

"No one ever said anything. Benlochie folk always try to be fair. But everyone felt it was because Martha suspected Sam had married her for the small holding that they quarrelled so much. It might have been better if they'd never married."

When Jim Stewart had gone Jenny rested her chin on one hand and

Too Spick And Span!

gazed out of the window. Her romantic young heart had been fired by what she had just been told.

"A penny for them." The voice was cheerful and teasing. "But don't tell me that pretty little head of yours can hold a serious thought!"

Jenny straightened and gazed sternly at the young man on the other side of the counter.

Ian Baird was too irresponsible and happy-go-lucky to merit any serious attention from her. At twenty-three he had taken out every girl in the village, except for Jenny. He'd tried hard. He'd issued invitation after invitation. But without success.

"My thoughts are my own concern," she told him spiritedly. "Are you wanting anything? Or were you just passing by?"

"I'll have a threepenny stamp, just to make the visit official," he grinned.

Ian was always too well dressed, Jenny thought crossly. She couldn't remember a time when he'd been tousled or dishevelled.

He worked in Abergelvie, in the offices of Mackenzie & Co., Export Merchants, and she supposed he had to look neat at work. But even in his free time he was always spick and span.

She gave him the stamp and took his threepence.

"Now I can get down to the real purpose of my visit." He leaned across the counter. "Will you come to the pictures at Abergelvie on Saturday with me, Jenny? There's a good film."

"Sorry," Jenny said crisply, shutting the stamp book. "But I've shopping to do on Saturday afternoon."

"I could meet you after the shopping. We could have tea and go on to the evening performance."

"I'm coming home on the five o'clock bus. I'm baby-sitting for Sally and Jim."

Sally was Jenny's elder sister. She had been married for three years and Jenny adored her twelve-month-old niece, Linda.

"Perhaps Sally would like two baby-sitters." Ian was impudently pressing. "I'll willingly help you out."

Despite herself Jenny smiled.

"I'll tell Sally," she said gravely. "When I'm unable to oblige I'm sure she'll be glad of your services."

IAN sighed deeply and took his elbow off the counter.

"Well, no one can say I don't try. But don't think I give up easily!"

With that threat and a gay wave of his hand he was gone.

Glancing at the clock, Jenny prepared to close up.

That evening her father, who was Abergelvie's postmaster, had some astonishing news.

"I hear Ian Baird's got promotion. He's been made chief clerk. I had lunch with Mr Mackenzie today and he told me. He thinks a lot of young Ian, says he's got a good head for business and that he'll be office manager when Geoff Harper retires in three years' time."

Jenny stared at her father. Ian responsible and well-thought of! She could hardly believe it, and said as much.

"Well, folk aren't always what they seem," Mr Murdoch returned tolerantly.

The People's Friend Annual

But this new knowledge of Ian made no difference to Jenny's thoughts of him. In her eyes he was still too conceited and irresponsible.

THE next day Jenny was alone in the post office when the door opened and Mrs Wilkie came in. Jenny looked up and met her forbidding gaze. This wasn't the first time Mrs Wilkie had been to the post office since she had been working there. Usually Jenny served her politely and quickly, with only the necessary words between them.

But today she remembered what Jim Stewart had told her. Suddenly she had a brilliant idea.

She, Jenny Murdoch, was going to change Mrs Wilkie's life for her. She was going to hold out the hand of friendship, show her that at least one person in Benlochic understood her.

"Ah! Mrs Wilkie!" "Jenny didn't realise that in her sudden enthusiasm there was a forced heartiness in her voice. "It is nice seeing you! And what can I do for you?"

Mrs Wilkie stared hard at her and put two shillings down on the counter.

"Eight threepenny stamps."

Jenny peeled them off and pushed them across the counter.

"It's a lovely day, isn't it?" she said brightly—too brightly, if only she had known. "Have you enjoyed your walk down to the village?"

Mrs Wilkie was watching her with growing suspicion. Facing those watchful eyes, Jenny felt the smile on her face becoming fixed.

"What are you smiling at?" Mrs Wilkie asked suddenly. "What do you find so funny? Are you trying to make fun of me?"

Jenny's mouth closed slowly.

Her stoutly-shod feet set firmly, Mrs Wilkie eyed her angrily from the other side of the counter.

The door opened behind them and someone came in, but neither was aware of it.

"Mrs Wilkie——" Jenny stammered. "Of course not. I wouldn't dream—I mean, you've got me all wrong!"

"Just because you're young and slim and pretty, you think you can make a joke of me." Mrs Wilkie's eyes blazed anger. "I'll not have it, do you hear?"

She turned and stamped past Jim Stewart. The door banged after her.

"I was only trying to be friendly," Jenny told Jim. "I wasn't laughing at her, really I wasn't."

"I know." Jim put his bag on the counter. "But I told you what it would be like when you came up against her yourself, Jenny. Best leave her alone like everyone else."

Jenny was distressed, but she realised there was nothing she could do to put things right. Mrs Wilkie wouldn't listen. Jim Stewart was right. It was best to leave her alone.

ON Saturday afternoon Jenny walked to the bus stop at the end of the High Street and joined the waiting queue. Just in front of her was the broad, forbidding figure of Martha Wilkie, shopping bag in hand.

The bus came and Jenny got on. Everyone avoided Martha Wilkie, who sat on the long seat near the door.

Jenny went to the front. She was just settling herself when a cheerful voice spoke beside her.

"Good, an empty seat. I'll join you!"

It was Ian, looking immaculate as usual, in a well-pressed tweed suit and polished brogue shoes, a macintosh over one arm.

"It's going to rain," he said as the bus started up. "You should have come prepared."

Jenny looked down at her blue suit and then at the sun threading the road ahead. Rain seemed far away and she smiled in a superior manner. Only someone as ridiculously careful as Ian would have thought of carrying a raincoat on such a day.

The bus drew into the square at Abergelvie and Jenny rose with relief. Ian lingered on the pavement. She had the feeling he was going to suggest he came shopping with her. But with a hasty good-bye she was off down the street, passing the plodding figure of Mrs Wilkie without a glance.

Ian didn't follow her and Jenny soon lost herself in the pleasurable task of choosing a new dress. There were some purchases to be made for her mother. With a little window-shopping and a quiet cup of tea, that completed her afternoon.

She turned back along the street, walking slowly because the bus was not due for another quarter of an hour.

Two minutes later it began to rain. The big, dark cloud which had crept up on Abergelvie almost unnoticed, unleashed its burden.

SHIELDING the bag with her new dress as best she could, Jenny started to run. She rushed breathlessly into a doorway opposite the bus stop. Quite a crowd of folk were sheltering there already.

"I told you it was going to rain."

Snug and snug in his macintosh, Ian grinned at her. As Jenny felt her hair straggling down her neck, he brought out a man-sized handkerchief.

"Here, I'll take your parcels while you rub yourself dry."

"I thought you decided to go to the pictures." Jenny wiped her hair and returned his handkerchief. "Don't tell me you weren't able to find suitable company?"

"You're right there. When you turned down my offer I decided to go home and nurse my aching heart all alone!"

Jenny flushed under the smiling glances of their appreciative audience. Luckily their attention was diverted by the sudden arrival of Mrs Wilkie. Loaded down with shopping she edged herself into the shelter of the next doorway.

She was a sorry sight. Her hat brim was bowed down with rain, her coat dripping, her shoes and stockings wet through. One shoe lace was undone and trailed dangerously, though she seemed unaware of it. She glared at the faces peering from the other doorway and turned her back on them.

Jenny hesitated. The lace might trip her. Someone ought to tell her about it. But who?

She glanced at the other folk, seeing the way their eyes shifted from

the formidable figure, knowing that each one thought it best to leave her alone.

Jenny decided to say nothing too. Mrs Wilkie might think she was trying to poke fun at her again.

WHEN the bus came everyone got on.

Jenny and Ian couldn't get to the front and had to sit in the back seat, Ian still clutching Jenny's parcels. He put them in the rack above their heads. Then he took off his macintosh, folding it neatly before placing it in the rack too.

His eyes roamed the bus idly. Coming back down the gangway they settled on Mrs Wilkie who sat staring straight ahead.

She was sitting sideways to them, in the seat that faced inward to the gangway. Her feet were planted sturdily on the wet, muddy floor, the lace of the right shoe dangling undone in the wet.

Ian glanced up at Mrs Wilkie's face, his mouth opening as though to tell her about it.

Then suddenly, before Jenny knew what he intended doing, he was out of his seat.

Mrs Wilkie glanced up at him, her eyes hardening as she realised he was going to speak to her.

"Your shoe lace is undone, Mrs Wilkie," he announced. "It could be dangerous if you tripped over it."

Everyone turned in their seats. Jenny felt her heart miss a beat. Didn't Ian realise Mrs Wilkie would think he was trying to make her look foolish in front of everyone?

Everyone waited for Mrs Wilkie's wrath to break over Ian's head.

But Ian took them by surprise.

Dropping on one knee in the muddy gangway, he took hold of the trailing lace.

"I'll do it for you. It won't take a moment."

It was a strange picture. The young man in his immaculate suit, kneeling before the bedraggled figure, doing up the lace of a stout, well-worn shoe.

Mrs Wilkie's mouth opened. Those watching waited with bated breath to hear the familiar, biting speech.

But for once Mrs Wilkie seemed beyond speech.

Ian looked up at her as he pulled the knot firmly.

"There you are. All's well with the world."

There was no laughter in his voice, no teasing.

Mrs Wilkie stared down into his eyes. She blinked rapidly and her hands twisted together.

Ian went back to his seat and the heads of everyone turned to the front again.

Jenny stared up at Ian. His hair had fallen across his forehead. He brushed it back quickly and grinned at her, but the memory of slight dishevelment remained with her.

She glanced down at the knee of his trousers. A round, wet patch of mud darkened it where he had knelt.

They were almost into Benlochie now. Folk were preparing to alight, gathering up parcels, peering out of windows, telling each other that the rain had eased.

Too Spick And Span!

The rain had indeed eased. Jenny and Ian left the bus, Ian holding his macintosh over his arm. Surprisingly, Jenny lingered.

She couldn't have said why. She only knew that the brief glimpse of a new, unknown Ian had caught at her imagination. But before she could analyse the new emotion in her heart, Mrs Wilkie descended behind them.

Ian moved forward, with a glance up at the sky which showed promise of more rain to come.

"Take this. It'll keep you from getting any wetter. I shan't be needing it any more tonight. I'll walk up your way tomorrow sometime to fetch it."

He draped the macintosh about Mrs Wilkie's broad shoulders and stood back.

He didn't offer to walk with her, or carry her parcels up the long hill. He knew enough not to press the moment too far. He just stood and waited while Mrs Wilkie's mouth opened and then shut again.

For a moment she looked at Ian suspiciously. Then, realising he was sincere, she dipped below the surface of her pride and acknowledged his gesture, though without a spoken word of thanks. It was a long time since Mrs Wilkie had thanked anyone for anything.

But she turned to Jenny, her eyes going over the small, slim figure, the red-gold hair already drying into curls, the blue eyes that watched her with wariness.

"You're a very lucky girl," she said. "A very lucky girl."

Then she was plodding away from them, the macintosh billowing from her back but anchored firmly to her shoulders.

"You know, Jenny," Ian's voice held a compassion that was no longer surprising. "She's not what she seems. But then, most folk are all right if you get below the surface."

He turned to face her, his eyes serious. He was still thinking of Mrs Wilkie, and yet there seemed to be a message in his eyes for the girl standing before him.

Jenny's breath caught in her throat. Her heart jumped madly. Suddenly she wanted to know more about this other side of Ian—the warm, serious, likeable side she had seen for the first time today.

She looked down at the drying mud on the knee of his trousers.

"You'd better come home with me," she said a little unsteadily. "I'll get that mud off before it does too much damage."

They walked along together, Ian carrying her packages.

"I meant that about baby-sitting with you tonight," he said. "I'd like to do that more than anything."

The old teasing glint of laughter was back in his eyes again, but Jenny's heart leaped.

"In that case you'd better have tea with us. You wouldn't have time to get home and back again before seven o'clock."

AND what of Mrs Wilkie, as two happy young people walked their way into a new life?

She was plodding up Killick Hill, Ian's macintosh still firmly anchored to her shoulders. She was cold and wet and tired, for the hill was always something of a struggle for her.

But somewhere, deep inside, there was a little spark of warmth.

The People's Friend Annual

The years of loneliness and regret had taken their toll but one small gesture, made without any thought of what could be got from it, had been made to her that day. A young man had knelt to her before everyone, as though she were a queen.

Suddenly she was thinking of Sam. She hadn't allowed herself to think of him for a long time. She hadn't been able to.

But now she could. His gentleness in the first months of their marriage, his seeming contentment. Those first months had been happy for her too. She had wanted him to have everything she could give. It was she who had made him take the money to buy the motorbike he had always wanted.

It was after that the doubts came. She remembered then that the house and the smallholding were hers and that Sam had brought nothing to the marriage except himself.

There were, too, those memories of the years before Sam, when she had watched other young girls, so slim and pretty, and wished she could be like them. She had never thought anyone would want to marry her.

So the doubt and mistrust in her heart had soon bred quarrels. It was after a quarrel that Sam had died.

Sam had been gentle, just like that young man today. He had watched her with knowledge and understanding in those first months when they were happy. In his own way he had tried to give her self-confidence.

The knowledge seeped into her tired mind at last. Ian Baird's small gesture was bearing fruit. Sam had truly loved her when he married her. She had been blind for so long!

The words Ian had said to her came into her mind.

"There you are. All's well with the world."

Not yet perhaps, because so much regret and bitterness had to be overcome. But with time and thought widening that slight crack Ian had made in the crust of her pride, it might well be.

Sometime in the future Mrs Wilkie would make peace with herself and the past.

And with Benlochie too. Because those who had witnessed that unforgettable scene in the bus had learned their lesson too.

People are not always what they seem.



Another voyage safely made, another ship come home.

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS



IT was a very small fire, just three pieces of coal leaning together with a little red glow in the middle. Miss Pollett drew the shabby horse-hair chair nearer the hearth so that she wouldn't waste any of the warmth. When it died away completely, she would go to bed.

It would be warm in bed. She would fill her two hot water bottles, one for her feet and one for her back, to take the chill from the sheets. Then in about half an hour she would be quite cosy and with luck she might sleep. But it was not so good as sleeping with Annie.

Even as a child she had liked sleeping with Annie, her elder sister. But Annie was dead now. She had passed away a year ago and Miss Pollett was quite alone in a small house on the third floor of a Glasgow tenement.

The People's Friend Annual

She put on her steel-rimmed spectacles and read the last paragraphs of the story in the church magazine.

The story finished, Miss Pollett moved on stiff, aching legs to the bedside. Her eyes fell on the old pre-war radio that stood on the table there. She flicked the switch.

There was a long pause, then a boy's voice, flute-like and limpid, filled the dingy little room.

"Once in Royal David's city," came the sweet treble.

Miss Pollett stood still beside the wireless set, her faded blue eyes pensive and far-seeing. The quality of the reproduction was not very good. It was an old set. Annie had bought it second-hand many years before. Faint crackles and hisses occasionally interrupted the music.

The whole choir joined in, massive and rich.

"He came down to earth from Heaven, Who is God and Lord of all—"

MISS POLLETT came back to earth, and she glanced at the calendar. Christmas was only three days away! There was little she could do about it. The pension didn't stretch to luxuries.

All at once the sound of the wireless stopped. She went over to have a look at it. It was plugged in all right and still switched on.

She bumped the side with the palm of her hand. Such treatment had worked once or twice before. But this time it failed. There was utter silence.

Her deeply-lined face fell. This was a disaster. She liked the wireless. By its magic it brought something of the outside world into the loneliness of her room-and-kitchen. It brought voices to her, friendly voices she had come to love and recognise.

Miss Pollett sighed. There was nothing to be done about it and she was quite resigned. She had known so much of life's major tragedies that another little one couldn't matter so much. Of course, she could have the set repaired, but that might cost quite a bit and she couldn't afford it.

She was about to take off her dressing-gown and slip into bed when there came a gentle knock on the door. With a start, Miss Pollett made her way across the little kitchen, through the dark passage and along to the door. She unlocked it and cautiously looked out.

"Who's there?" she asked tremulously, her eyes straining into the gloom.

"It's me, Jessie Calder," came a pleasant girlish voice. "I've come with the church magazine."

"Oh, come in, lass," said Miss Pollett, a note of relief in her voice.

The visitor entered and soon they were seated beside the dying fire. Miss Pollett apologised for it, explaining she had been about to go to bed.

"I'm so sorry," explained Jess. "But, you see, we're so busy in the shop just now! I just couldn't get away to distribute my magazines any earlier."

She was a pretty girl, fresh-faced and bright-eyed, with soft auburn hair.

"I shouldn't be keeping you out of bed, Miss Pollett," she went on.

"Don't you worry about that. I'm only too pleased to have a visitor."

WITH compassion Jess saw that the old woman was enjoying herself talking. She must have few chances to meet people and she was making the most of this one.

Jess let the old woman ramble on, talking of her childhood days in the

The Night Before Christmas

country, of friends and relations long since passed on, of events still vivid in her mind. But Miss Pollett suddenly stopped.

"But why am I telling you all this?" she sighed. "It can be of little interest to a lass like you."

"Not at all," Jess protested.

Not that she was really interested in the events Miss Pollett was describing but the old lady's pleasure filled her with a warm glow.

Miss Pollett got to her feet.

"You'll have a cup of tea?"

Jess was about to refuse, for she really didn't have the time. But she realised she couldn't deny the old lady the pleasure of giving her a cup of tea, so she accepted.

They chatted of this and that. Jess realised the old woman was unconsciously trying to keep the conversation going as long as possible.

But finally she rose to her feet.

"I'll have to be going now, Miss Pollett. Really I must."

Miss Pollett sighed.

"I suppose you'll have to. But I've fairly enjoyed your visit. It's grand to see a young face about the place now and again."

At the door Jess turned.

"Will we be seeing you at the Christmas social in the church hall, Miss Pollett?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

There was a note of wistful regret in the reply.

"You see, the stairs are getting a bit much for me these days. The doctor says I'm not to exert myself too much."

"What a pity!"

"Oh, don't worry about me. I get a good deal of pleasure in just thinking of all the folk there and the bairns enjoying themselves. Forbye, there's many worse off than I am."

On a sudden impulse, Jess bent over and kissed the old woman's withered cheek. A look of such wondering gratitude spread over her face that Jess felt a wave of compassion surge up in her heart.

She took the old woman's hand and held it for a moment.

"Good-night, Miss Pollett." Her voice quivered a little. "God bless you! Now you must go to bed and sleep well."

BUT it was not to be.

Just then a great wave of raucous music swept up the dark walls of the tenement. It came from the courtyard below.

Jess stepped back into the room.

"What on earth's that?" she asked.

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Miss Pollett in bewilderment.

"You'd never sleep with that racket going on," asserted Jess, flushed with resentment. "Let's have a look."

Miss Pollett drew back the heavy curtains and raised the blind a little. The two women looked down into the courtyard below, a dreary square of concrete divided into smaller squares by iron railings.

But now the place looked like fairy-land. It was brilliantly lit by what looked like car headlights.

The People's Friend Annual

On top of a makeshift platform was a band, a group of three youths playing guitar, accordion and drums. The tallest of the trio was a tall youth in a gay Norwegian-type pullover and baggy flannels. A mop of fair hair tumbled over his eyes and his lean body moved in time to the music. He was playing the accordion and singing at the top of his voice.

The whole courtyard was full of dancing figures. Skirts were swirling and hair bobbing. Girls laughed shrilly and young men shouted. The place was alive with light and colour and music.

Miss Pollett bent her grey head and surveyed the scene.

"Will that be what they call Rock an' Roll?"

Jess looked grim.

"I'll 'Rock an' Roll' them! It's a shame, keeping decent folk out of their beds!"

"But it's not nine o'clock yet," Miss Pollett pointed out. "You can hardly expect young folk to be like me and go to bed early every night."

Jess pointed downwards. "Do you know any of them, Miss Pollett?"

Miss Pollett peered.

"Yes, she said slowly. "The big one playing the accordion is Andrew Anderson. A nice lad, Andrew."

"He has no right to be making a row like that."

The old woman smiled wistfully.

"Oh, but he's young. No doubt he enjoys the kind of music he's making."

The very meekness of the old woman's reply stirred Jess to further anger. She made for the door.

"Where are you going?" asked Miss Pollett.

"I'm going to put an end to that racket!"

Miss Pollett reached out a protesting hand.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that——"

But she might just as well have saved her breath, for Jess was already running downstairs.

MISS POLLETT went back to the window. Down below her she saw Jess emerge from the close and enter the courtyard.

Approaching the platform on which the little group of musicians stood, she gestured to catch Andrew's eye. He stopped playing and jumped down. But the guitar and the drums and the dancing went on as before.

Miss Pollett could see that an argument was going on between the two.

Andrew, however, merely grinned. Then, jumping on to the platform again, he resumed his playing.

Jess watched in anger and shouted up to him, but she was completely ignored. She stood still for a moment, then turned and ran back into the close.

A few moments later she was back in Miss Pollett's kitchen.

"He just laughed at me!" she burst out, her eyes bright with indignation.

"What did you say to him?" asked Miss Pollett gently.

"I told him to stop that horrible row because it was keeping folk from sleeping—the old folk especially."

Miss Pollett felt Jess might have been a bit more diplomatic.

"He's not a bad lad, you know. Maybe a wee bit harum-scarum but——"

"He's a thoroughly thoughtless, selfish and rude young man," Jess in-

The Night Before Christmas

interrupted. "I'm sorry you have to live in the same building as he does. And I hope you get some sleep tonight—small thanks to him and his like."

When Jess had gone, the old woman went back to the window and stared down into the courtyard. Her mild eyes surveyed the scene of merriment below.

She knew she ought to feel indignant on account of all that Jess had done for her. But, on searching her thoughts, she found that she was not a bit angry.

On the contrary, by the time that the music ceased and the revellers departed, Miss Pollett was quite enjoying herself. It was much better than lying in bed all evening, she decided.

THE next evening about six o'clock Miss Pollett was surprised to find Andrew Anderson at her door. He looked abashed and ill at ease.

"I'm sorry, Miss Pollett."

The old lady looked at him with wondering eyes.

"Sorry for what, lad?"

"Sorry about last night—the dancing and the row and all that. You see, I didn't start thinking about it till afterwards. But that girl——"

Miss Pollett's eyes twinkled at him.

"Come in for a minute, Andrew, and tell me all about it."

He obeyed half-heartedly. Sitting beside the fire he began his explanations.

"You see, Miss Pollett, that girl you sent down——"

"But I didn't send her down," interrupted the old woman.

"Well, the girl who came down. She nettled me and I'm afraid I was a bit short with her. She seemed angry and abrupt—and I carried on with the music. You see, I like a bit of music and——"

"And so do I!" Miss Pollett assured him.

His blue eyes widened with relief.

"But she said I was keeping you awake!"

"Nothing of the kind!" declared Miss Pollett. "As a matter of fact, I quite enjoyed it. All the more so since my wireless is broken."

His youthful face was suddenly eager.

"Your set is broken! Why, Miss Pollett, that's my line of business. I work with a radio firm. Let's have a look at it!"

He examined the set, switched it on and worked about inside it. But only a few crackles rewarded his efforts and he shook his head.

"It's a valve, Miss Pollett. The set is obsolete and that kind of valve is impossible to find nowadays. I'm afraid it's a dead loss."

The resignation on the old woman's face sent a pang of compassion to his heart.

She smiled wearily.

"Well, it owes me nothing. I've had it for twenty years."

"It's a pity," Andrew consoled her, "with Christmas coming on, too."

"I'll just have to learn to do without it," she declared.

Andrew got up to leave. Standing at the top of the stairs he turned round suddenly.

"What's her name, Miss Pollett?"

"Whose name?"

"The girl who told me off."

The People's Friend Annual

Miss Pollett looked mischievous.

"Oh, that girl! You want to keep out of her way. But her name's Jess Calder—and a right fine lass she is."

He was silent for a few moments. "She's a smasher!"

Miss Pollett was not sure if Jess would be flattered at this description.

"You think so?" she asked.

"She's bonny when she's angry. Does she often come to see you, Miss Pollett?"

"Yes, from time to time."

He made a mental note of this news, smiled vaguely to himself then sped downstairs.

Miss Pollett watched till he was out of sight. Then she closed the door and went back to the fire, feeling strangely happy.

IT was early afternoon on the day before Christmas. A biting wind with a threat of snow behind it blew through the streets. Scarves and heavy coats were in evidence among the hurrying crowds who thronged the shops as they entered the last lap of the Christmas rush.

Miss Pollett sat at her front window, looking down on the street. A feeling of vague excitement filled her.

Christmas meant little to her as far as gifts and extra fare went, but there was something in the air that made her heart beat a little more quickly.

Dusk fell quickly over the city. The lights went on in the streets, bathing the drab pavements in a golden glow. Fairy lights twinkled in shop windows and artificial frost and tinsel glittered gaily.

Miss Pollett suddenly felt cold. She drew her shawl more tightly round her thin shoulders and was about to move through to the fire in the kitchen when something in the street below attracted her attention.

Jess was coming along the street. Just as she moved into the circle of light cast by a street lamp, a man's figure came up behind her. It was young Andrew.

Miss Pollett saw her start of surprise as he spoke. Jess made as if to move on but Andrew caught her arm insistently.

Was he apologising?

The conversation went on for some time. Miss Pollett sensed a softening in Jess's attitude, for she listened attentively to whatever Andrew was telling her. Suddenly she looked up at Miss Pollett's window and smiled happily. Then the young couple parted and Jess made for the entrance to the close.

Intrigued, Miss Pollett went through to the kitchen and waited for the knock on the door.

"Here's a wee minding from the kirk," Jess said a minute later as she came in. She laid a small parcel on the table. "A bun, some shortbread and a bottle of ginger wine."

Miss Pollett was taken aback at this unexpected gesture.

"Folk are so kind!" she exclaimed, as gratitude welled up inside her.

"I'll have to hurry," Jess said making for the door. "We got an hour for tea tonight. The shop will be late in closing and I thought I'd come along with this now in time for Christmas."

"It's very good of you, lass," murmured Miss Pollett.

Jess stopped on the top step of the stairs.

The Night Before Christmas

"Well, I won't say good-night yet," she said coyly. "I might see you again before Christmas Day."

"You might!"

"Yes, I might. Just wait and see," replied Jess, and in a moment she was off, her feet twinkling down the worn steps.

Christmas is special, thought Miss Pollett. So she decided to indulge in the luxury of a fire that would burn till midnight and fill the little kitchen with warmth.



About nine o'clock she cut a generous slice of bun and made a cup of tea.

"I'm not going to bed yet!" she said defiantly.

Just then a burst of music came from below. She went to the window. Another dance was going on in the courtyard.

Miss Pollett's foot tapped unconsciously to the rhythm of the music. When it stopped she felt quite exhilarated, as if she had been taking part in the revelry.

Looking at the clock, she saw it was about eleven. She had just decided to go to bed when there came a gentle tap on the door. She opened it carefully.

The People's Friend Annual

Jess was standing there, with Andrew behind her.

"We've come to wish you a very Merry Christmas," Jess said cheerfully.

"And a very Merry Christmas to you, lass. And to you, too, Andrew. Come on in and have a cup of tea."

Jess smiled mischievously.

"Andrew isn't coming in—not yet anyhow. He has some business to attend to. I'll come in, Miss Pollett—but just leave the door open."

Mystified, Miss Pollett led Jess inside.

"Wasn't that an awful row again tonight?" Jess asked.

"It didn't worry me," admitted the old woman. "To tell you the truth, I rather enjoyed it. My feet were tapping."

"Come through to the front room for a minute," Jess told her, "and you'll hear some real music. Some of the young folks who were at the dance are going to sing carols in the street."

They were lined up on the pavement below. Two accordeons played an introduction, then the young men and women sang together the old songs of rejoicing that have gladdened the hearts of men since once a child was born in Bethlehem.

Afterwards Jess and Miss Pollett went back to the kitchen.

Andrew was there. He had just unwrapped a modern shiny wireless set and was placing it on the little table beside Miss Pollett's bed.

"For you," Jess told her.

There was a mist before the old woman's eyes and she could find no words.

"About the dances," Andrew explained. "You see, Miss Pollett, some of the young folk around here thought it might be a good thing to run a few dances in the backcourts to raise some money for Christmas. I mean, to get some things for some of the old folk who weren't so lucky as others. When I found out your set was broken I thought—well, this——"

"But it must have cost an awful lot, laddie," said Miss Pollett, her voice trembling with emotion.

"Not at all," he assured her. "It came into the shop in part exchange for a new one. I bought it and did it up as good as new. Just listen!"

He switched it on. The little room was filled with gay music, rich and full and bright. The clarity of tone amazed the old woman.

"Shall we leave it on?" Jess asked.

Miss Pollett nodded and indicated the cups and the slices of cherry bun.

Andrew and Jess left just after eleven. Miss Pollett noticed that as they descended the stair he took her arm, steering her carefully through patches of shadow. And she noticed that there was a light in Jess's face as if an inner radiance were shining through.

"Merry Christmas, Miss Pollett!" they shouted together.

"Merry Christmas, Andrew and Jess!" she called back.

And it came to Miss Pollett with a sudden flash of realisation that she had seen the beginning of something new—and yet very old.

Very daring, Miss Pollett stayed up till midnight, listening to the wireless. Her aged face glowed in the firelight, but not so warmly as her heart glowed within her.

And when Christmas Day was ushered in to the glorious music of "Oh, come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant," Miss Pollett felt that the words were but an echo of the joy in her heart.



Hawick

J. Campbell Kerr

by Elizabeth Cator



THEN CUPID CLEARED OUT!

WHEN Myra Nicholson's small brother, David, went to see a film featuring his favourite detective he never realised how important a part he was soon going to play in helping Kenniemuir's popular young policeman, Ian Crosbie.

But David did go to see the film, and after the first ten exciting minutes he forgot all about his ambition to be a cowboy. So, you see. . .

Then Cupid Cleared Out!

But we'd better begin at the beginning!

It was just before Easter that Myra Nicholson and P.C. Ian Crosbie saw each other for the first time and fell head over heels in love.

Myra's curly hair was of that shade that has more red than gold in it. Her eyes were more green than grey. Altogether she was a lovely girl. She certainly looked so to Ian on the day she arrived in Kenniemuir!

Mrs Nicholson had died several years before. It was Myra who looked after young David and kept house for their father, the newly appointed headmaster of the village school.

On that sunny morning P.C. Crosbie happened to be cycling towards the school when he noticed a rather shabby car stop at the gate. Immediately one of the rear doors was flung open and a small boy catapulted out of it on to the pavement.

"That'll be the new headmaster's son," Ian thought. "And a bit of a handful, too, or I miss my guess!" he grinned to himself.

But the grin gave way to a stare of admiration at the girl who followed David out of the car.

Slim and graceful in her white duffle coat, her red-gold curls blowing in the spring breeze, Myra sent Ian's heart rocketing. At the same time her colour deepened visibly as she met the handsome young policeman's dark eyes. A moment later Ian had disappeared round a bend in the road.

When and where would their first meeting take place? Myra's heart was asking the question as eagerly as Ian's, but neither of them could have guessed how quickly it was to be answered.

For that very afternoon David, exploring the neighbourhood in his usual reckless way, leaned too far over the edge of a disused quarry and fell to a ledge eight or ten feet below.

He was discovered there by a white-faced Myra half an hour after he'd failed to turn up at teatime. And, of course, it was P.C. Crosbie she ran to for help. He rescued the subdued explorer with a skill that covered him with glory in David's eyes and in Myra's heart.

THE young people could hardly have had a more romantic introduction, could they? Surely, you'd think, nothing could go wrong after that?

It could, though! However, it was several weeks before the clouds began to gather, and during that time David saw the film that was to cause so much heartache.

It was one that would have thrilled any boy, with its glimpses of what goes on behind the scenes at Scotland Yard. And as for the dashing detective hero, David talked of nothing else for days.

Myra made a rueful face as she thought of the present she'd bought for his birthday. There didn't seem much point in giving him a cowboy outfit now!

The next afternoon she took the bulky package into Muirton and sought out the pleasant assistant who had served her before.

"I bought this cowboy outfit for my small brother the other day," she said. "But I'm afraid his ideas have changed since then! He hasn't even mentioned cowboys since he saw that Scotland Yard picture——"

She broke off as the smiling girl took the cowboy set from her and held out a smaller box labelled "Junior Detective Set."

"Why, that's just the thing!" Myra opened the box and smiled.

The People's Friend Annual

There was an absurd false moustache and a pair of dark glasses. She also found a bottle of finger-print powder, a magnifying glass, and two large notebooks labelled "Clues."

The birthday morning, when it came, was bright and sunny. David was practically speechless with excitement as he opened his parcels, and when Mr Nicholson gave him his first bicycle his happiness was almost too great to bear.

"I don't know which he's most pleased with," Mr Nicholson chuckled to Myra. "The bike or the detective set!"

Myra laughed.

"He can do his sleuthing on the bicycle!" she said. "And talking of sleuths," she added with a casual air that belied her beating heart, "David wants to invite Ian Crosbie to his birthday tea. They've become great friends since Ian rescued him from the quarry."

Mr Nicholson regarded his daughter's heightened colour with amusement, but he was too understanding to tease her.

THE four of them were very gay as they sat around the tea table.

"What a splendid cake!" Ian gazed admiringly at the iced confection in front of David. "You didn't make it yourself, did you?"

It was Myra's father who answered.

"Indeed she did!" he said proudly. "And everything else on the table, too! Myra's a first-class cook. Try one of these cinnamon buns."

"They're grand!" was Ian's verdict."

David couldn't keep quiet a minute longer.

"Have you got a lot of finger-prints at the Police Station?" he interrupted suddenly. "Like they have at Scotland Yard?"

Ian shook his dark head.

"No, I haven't, old chap," he replied. "They're not necessary in a place like Kenniemuir. Nobody ever breaks the law, you see."

David's small face took on its most determined expression. He didn't see why his friend shouldn't have the same advantages as the men at Scotland Yard, and he decided there and then to do something about it.

Suppose he took the finger-prints of everyone in the village with that outfit in his detective set? He wouldn't say a word to Mr Crosbie until he'd got them all; then he'd give him the lot! Wouldn't he be surprised!

But now Myra was lighting the candles on his cake, and he had to blow them all out and cut big slices for everyone. What with one thing and another, he didn't think about the finger-prints again until he woke up the following morning.

DAVID told Myra his plan over breakfast in the sunny kitchen.

"Don't you think it's a good idea?" he asked.

Myra was all for anything remotely connected with P.C. Crosbie!

"I think it's a very good idea. You can use one of the clue books."

"O K," agreed David. "And you can be the first one in it. And then Dad, and then. . ."

The list that followed took him a long time to complete. It included the butcher, the baker, the grocer, the milkman and the friendly postman. In fact about the only person in the village he hadn't thought of was P.C.

Then Cupid Cleared Out!

Crosbie's mother. But that was put right later when he was on his way to post a letter for Myra.

As he passed the Police Station kindly Mrs Crosbie was in her pretty garden. She greeted him with a smile.

"A little bird told me you had a birthday yesterday," she said. "Come in and have some milk and a piece of cake."

David trotted delightedly into the house with her. He was just describing his new bicycle through a large mouthful of fruit cake when a tall girl in a blue dress walked into the room.

She smiled at him. A nice, friendly smile, David thought. She was pretty, too, with very fair hair and china blue eyes.

"This is Jean Rankine," Mrs Crosbie explained. "She lives in Glasgow, but she's had summer 'flu. She's staying with us for a few days' holiday before she goes back to work."

David looked at the girl thoughtfully. He'd already told Mrs Crosbie about the fingerprints he was going to collect for her son, and she'd smilingly promised to keep the secret. She'd also agreed to have her own prints taken.

Should he take Jean's as well? It was a ticklish point for David to decide. She didn't live in the village, of course. But on the other hand her prints would help to make the book nice and full.

"I'll ask Myra when I get home," he thought.

But when he did he found her attitude puzzling to say the least of it!

She seemed quite pleased when he told her about Mrs Crosbie asking him in, and promising to have her prints taken. It was only when he asked her advice about Jean that the atmosphere became suddenly strained.

"What does this girl look like?" she asked. "Is she tall, with fair hair?"

David nodded.

Myra stared at him abstractedly.

"That must have been her in the Post Office yesterday," she said in a small voice. "She's very pretty."

"Not as pretty as you," David said matter-of-factly.

But his sister didn't hear him. She was remembering a slim hand resting on the stamp counter, and the diamond ring on its engagement finger.

"I'm going up to my room for a minute," she said unsteadily as she hurried out of the kitchen.

MYRA was already drying the tears that had blinded her as she stumbled upstairs.

"You've only yourself to blame!" she told her flushed reflection angrily. "There was no earthly reason why Ian should tell you he's engaged. It's not his fault if you were fool enough to mistake ordinary politeness for——"

Tears threatened her again as she remembered the happiness her brief dream had brought her, but she blinked them away.

"That's all it was!" she whispered. "Just a dream!"

Her head was high when she went down to the kitchen again, and she was smiling. In fact, for the rest of the day she seemed even gayer than usual. Only instead of listening eagerly when David talked about his friend, P.C. Crosbie, she now seemed to shy away from any mention of his name.

David was too young to notice that from then on she also avoided the

The People's Friend Annual

good-looking policeman himself as far as she could. But Ian very soon became aware of her new elusiveness. He wondered unhappily what he could have done to offend her.

Then Jean Rankine's stay came to an end.

"It's nice I'm off duty on your last evening," Ian said to her. "You and Mother and I can go into Muirton to the pictures."

Until lately he'd envied his brother being engaged to such a charming girl, and wondered if he would ever be as happy himself. But since the Nicholsons' very first day in Kenniemuir he'd known his search was at an end. Myra was the one girl in the world for him, and he didn't mean to lose her through some foolish misunderstanding.

"Next time I see her I'm going to ask her what's wrong!" he decided as the bus stopped outside Muirton's cinema.

But he did nothing of the kind, for he met her a moment later in the vestibule. Just as he was about to introduce Jean to her he realised she wasn't alone. She was with a good-looking, fair young man, and she swept past Ian with a cool little smile.

P.C. Crosbie saw very little of the excellent film that was shown that evening. And Myra, sitting three rows behind him, didn't see much of it either!

Ian hadn't meant to mention the fair young man to David, but he was so worried that the subject cropped up of its own accord the next time he met his little friend.

He was cycling down the quiet lane behind the schoolhouse when he saw David wobbling towards him on his new bike. He congratulated him on the speed with which he'd learned to ride it, then he remarked that he'd been to the Muirton cinema the evening before.

"I saw your sister there," he added casually. "With a friend."

David nodded.

"Wallace Fraser," he said. "He's always asking Myra to go out with him, but she doesn't often go."

Ian's heart leaped.

"Why not?" he asked eagerly.

"I don't think she likes him much," David said briefly. He could think of far more interesting things to talk about than his sister's admirers!

"I can turn round now!" he boasted. "Would you like to see me?"

And Ian was so grateful to him for restoring his peace of mind that he watched with the most flattering attention for nearly ten minutes!

Myra wouldn't be able to go on avoiding him for much longer, he told himself. The fete in aid of Kenniemuir Cottage Hospital was being held on the following Saturday afternoon, and he knew from his mother that Myra would be helping in the refreshment tent. He'd be the first customer for tea and get hold of her somehow.

THE great day dawned beautifully warm and sunny. The small park where the fete was to be held was a scene of great activity.

Ian Crosbie was one of the first to go through the turnstile, and he was soon trying his luck at everything from hoop-la to shying coconuts.

His mother had told him that she and her helpers would begin serving teas at half-past three, but the time went so slowly that once or twice he

Then Cupid Cleared Out!

felt sure his watch must have stopped. However, at last he saw that the tent was open for business, and he was the very first customer.

The moment Myra saw him enter the tent she blushed scarlet and began busily rearranging some cups and saucers on the counter. But Mrs Crosbie, who realised that something had gone wrong between the two young people, was sure they only needed bringing together.

She smiled at Myra.

"I think I'll let you wait on Ian," she said.

Ian flashed his mother a look of gratitude.

"May I have a cup of tea, please?" he asked.

"Certainly!" came the cool answer. But as Myra showed no sign of saying anything more, Mrs Crosbie came to the rescue again.

"Have one of Myra's cinnamon buns," she suggested. "You know how good they are!"

"I certainly do!" Ian murmured. "I'll have two, if I may."

Myra's slim fingers trembled slightly as she put the buns on a plate. She was still afraid to meet Ian's eyes in case she gave herself away, but she managed a polite little smile.

"That will be a shilling, please."

When Ian had paid he carried his tea disconsolately to a table near the entrance.

Absently he took a bite out of one of Myra's buns, and it tasted so horrible he nearly choked. Something very serious must have gone wrong in the making of it!

Ian didn't know much about cooking, but he supposed that bun wasn't likely to be the only one. He took a cautious nibble at its companion, and his fears were confirmed.

What should he do? He hardly liked to go back to the counter and say something about it. It would sound too much like a complaint. It would be better to tell his mother privately, only that would have its dangers, too. In such a small tent he'd be bound to be overheard.

On the other hand, sooner or later some horrified customer would mention it, and Myra, who took such a pride in her cooking, would feel humiliated.

Suddenly Ian snapped his fingers triumphantly.

"Got it!" he said under his breath.

Slipping the half-eaten buns into his jacket pocket, he went in search of Myra's brother.

DAVID was having a wonderful time at the fete, and he greeted his friend with a delighted grin. But when he knew what Ian wanted him to do he became serious at once.

"I haven't time to explain now," Ian was saying hurriedly. "I'll tell you afterwards what it's all about. But there's a big dish of cinnamon buns on the counter in the refreshment tent. I want to buy them up before any of them get sold. I can't do it myself, because I don't want the ladies helping there to know there's something wrong with them, so——"

David's eyes opened very wide.

"Are they poisoned?" he asked in a dramatic whisper.

Ian laughed reassuringly.

The People's Friend Annual

"Of course not!" he said. "It's just—— But I can't stop to explain. Look, I want you to get hold of four other boys. There are about two dozen buns, so if they each buy six, that should clear the lot. Tell them to bring them straight to me. I'll be just over there by the lake. Here's the money."

Ian watched anxiously as David darted away over the grass.

"I hope it works!" he muttered.

But it worked like a charm. Although, by the third time she had been asked for cinnamon buns, Myra's pretty face was looking distinctly puzzled.

Meanwhile, David was scouring the grounds for a boy to buy the last half-dozen, but he wasn't finding it too easy.

Then he had an idea. Why shouldn't he buy this last lot of buns himself?

So a moment later he found himself facing his sister across the counter. Something about the searching way she looked at him made his voice falter as he explained what he'd come for. Myra pounced on him immediately.

"Now look here, David," she demanded, "what are you up to?"

So David told her.

Myra listened to his excited explanation in silence. At the end of it she thrust the buns into a paper bag and walked swiftly out of the tent.

David took the opportunity to make himself scarce. He had a feeling there was trouble in the air.

THE first Ian knew of Myra's approach was when he heard her icy voice just behind him.

"Here's the last of the buns!" she said. "I brought them myself in case you care to give some explanation for your extraordinary behaviour!"

Ian swung round. She looked so pretty it was all he could do not to take her in his arms.

"Have you tried them yourself?" he asked gently.

"Why should I? I've made them hundreds of times."

Laughter danced in Ian's dark eyes.

"I bet they never tasted like this before, though!" he told her, offering the bag.

Myra took one of the buns and sank her white teeth into it. She must have put bicarbonate of soda into them instead of baking powder!

Ian laughed outright at her horrified expression.

"See what I mean?" he asked.

But Myra wasn't laughing. She'd kept her chin up through all her recent heartbreak, but this small disaster had caught her unawares. Tears suddenly misted her grey eyes.

Then Ian really did take her in his arms.

"Darling, don't!" he stammered. "Please don't cry, when I love you so!"

Myra stood perfectly still for an instant, and then whispered a question brokenly into his broad shoulder.

"Fiancee?" Ian murmured into her bright hair. "What fiancee?"

After that there was silence under the trees by the lake. Neither of them noticed a face peering at them round a bend in the path.

It was a small face adorned with a large and slightly crooked moustache, and further disguised by a pair of dark glasses. But it soon went away, because even the most junior detective knows that it's no crime to steal a kiss.



by
*Elizabeth
Grey*

AN HOUR TILL THE DAWN

ROSE HUNTER glanced at Sister Tutor anxiously and drew a deep breath, like a public speaker facing an uncertain audience and trying to relax.

Sister Tutor had discovered only that morning that the September intake of probationer nurses had christened her "Sergeant-Major," and it had not sweetened her temper.

"Come on, Hunter. We can't wait all day," she said briskly.

Rose set off quickly across the highly-polished floor, skidded slightly and went red.

"Mrs Wilson," the demonstration model, lay on the white iron bed in the middle of the room, ready for another going over. No amount of washing

The People's Friend Annual

could damage her peaches-and-cream complexion, or wipe the complacent smirk from her lips.

"She'd be more real if she were pale and looked as though she had a pain," Rose often thought.

Reaching the bedside, Rose drew the curtains and tried to say a bright "Good-morning" to Mrs Wilson. She opened her mouth but no sound came. With a little more effort she produced a squeak.

"You must use your imagination more," Sister Tutor said encouragingly. "See Mrs Wilson as a real person, perhaps as someone who doesn't really want to get well because life has been a bit too much for her lately. You've got to make her want to get well."

Rose looked at the simper on the dummy's face. It was difficult to see her as anything but a dummy with an irritating smile.

"I—I think I'd do better with real people," she murmured nervously.

"I wish I could feel sure of that," Sister said. "Why don't you watch how Bryan does it? She's got the idea much better than any of you."

If only she could be like Brenda Bryan, Rose thought longingly. She treated the whole thing as a great joke and kept the other student nurses in fits of laughter.

AT the end of the session Sister Tutor went through her notebook and told them where they had gone wrong. Her eyes rested approvingly on Brenda Bryan, though once or twice she warned her not to go too far with her jokes.

When she came to Rose, Sister Tutor sighed as though the whole thing were hopeless. But despite her brusque manner, she realised how much Rose cared.

"You work very hard, Hunter," she said, trying to be kind. "But you mustn't be so self-conscious. And you must have more self-confidence."

There it was again. People had been saying that to Rose ever since she was a child. She suspected she had been something of a disappointment to her parents. Secretly they had longed to have a son for their second child. They already had Linda.

At school Linda had excelled in everything, in games as well as at her studies. Everyone expected Rose to do equally well and seemed surprised when she shone at nothing. Whatever she achieved came to her through sheer hard work.

She wanted so much to do well at nursing. It would break her heart if she failed. But the more she worried about her progress, the more her self-confidence ebbed away.

If only she didn't mind so much! She worked harder than anyone in her year and did quite well in the written weekly tests. It was only the practical tests carried out under Sister Tutor's critical gaze that proved so difficult.

AS the weeks went by the other student nurses soon started to tease Rose about the amount of work she put in.

"Take your nose out of that book, Rose," Brenda said one evening, tweaking the text-book out of her hands. "You're only young once. Come on out and have fun!"

"Come along to the club, Rose," someone else put in. "Roger Buchan may be there."

Everyone laughed as Rose blushed furiously. Ever since the practical week in the wards they had been teasing her about Roger Buchan.

A third-year medical student, Roger had the same reputation as Rose. It was said he did nothing but work and had no time for girls.

Normally the probationers had little contact with the medical students and knew little about them. But Brenda Bryan had come to St Christine's with a lifelong friend in Peter Roberts, also a third-year man. It was Peter who told Brenda about Roger. They didn't think it natural for anyone to concentrate on work so much. Since Rose had the same reputation, they enjoyed building up an imaginary romance for the unlikely pair.

Only Rose herself knew that as far as she was concerned, it wasn't quite so unlikely. She had only met Roger twice, and each time only for a minute or two.

He had stuck in her mind for two reasons. One was the patient and understanding way he had dealt with a hysterical child. The other was the way he had saved her from making a serious blunder, by leaving a case chart on a patient's bed.

Roger had quietly retrieved it and handed it to Rose without anyone noticing. As she took it from him their eyes met. In the middle of a nerve-racking morning it had been like a ray of warm spring sunshine.

THE three months in the preliminary training school ended in a series of tests. Rose passed quite well, despite a bad attack of nerves. Exams always had that effect on her. As this one meant more than any others she had ever sat, it was all the more of an ordeal.

The young probationers all had a few days' leave before starting work in the wards.

Rose's family were delighted to see her, but they all thought she had been working too hard.

"Don't you ever go out to parties?" her mother asked anxiously, "or to the cinema with a friend? It's not good to do nothing but study."

"I'll ease off a bit when I'm more sure of things," Rose protested. "I'm still a probationer. They could still get rid of me and say I was no good."

"What nonsense!" her mother scoffed affectionately. "If anyone was born to be a nurse, it's you!"

Rose gave a little laugh.

"You'd better argue the point with Sister Tutor. I don't think she'd agree."

But at the end of her test papers Sister had written, "Rose Hunter will probably make a very good nurse once she has acquired a little more confidence."

But what did one do about that!

A WEEK later the young probationers reassembled at the hospital and were directed to different wards.

Rose felt very keyed-up as she reported for duty in the Women's Surgical. She hoped she looked calmer than she felt.

To her surprise she found it much easier than it had been in the Training School. She was lucky with the sister in charge, who had endless patience and encouraged the younger ones to ask as many questions as they liked.

The People's Friend Annual

Sister Gordon took everything in her stride. Nothing ruffled her, and her manner with the patients was always reassuring and calm. Despite the flu epidemic that was raging, she never looked flustered.

One morning when she came on duty Rose was told to go straight to the duty room. Sister Gordon was there talking to the Night Sister. She glanced at Rose and smiled.

"This is Hunter," she told Night Sister. "You'll find her very conscientious and dependable."

Rose could hardly believe her ears.

"I want you to go on night duty tonight," Sister Gordon added. "Normally you probationers don't go on night duty so soon, but with this flu, things are a bit upside-down. So go off now and try to get in a bit more sleep during the day."

Rose felt in a whirl, both elated and apprehensive. Sister Gordon had shown trust and approval. Now she would have to prove herself worthy.

ROSE'S heart was pounding uncomfortably as she reported that evening. Night duty was bound to be very different. In the daytime the wards were bright and full of life. Everyone was as cheerful as their troubles permitted.

At night when it was still and hushed and gloomy, it would present a very different picture. Rose tried to crush back the sense of dread she felt.

The first night all went well. Rose breathed a sigh of relief as dawn broke and the day staff started appearing.

But the second night Sister decided to move Mrs Duncan into the small side-ward.

"I doubt she'll last the night," Sister Gordon said quietly in the duty room. "She seems to have given up the fight."

"Has her family been told?" Night Sister asked.

"As far as we know she hasn't got any," Sister Gordon replied.

Later that night Rose took round the nightcaps of malted milk and so on. The last sleeping tablet had been doled out, the last pillow turned. The lights were out, all but the reading lamp on the table in the centre of the ward.

The Night Sister beckoned to her. Rose followed her into the duty room.

"I want you to sit with Mrs Duncan," Sister said. "Talk to her if she wants to talk. Otherwise just be there in case she needs anything. I don't think she should be alone. Come and find me if—if any change takes place or if you are worried. I'll look in quite often in any case, but if you want me I'll be at the table in the main ward. All right?"

For a moment Rose could not speak. Then she straightened her shoulders.

"Yes, Sister."

Sister's hand rested on her shoulder for a minute.

"Good girl!" she said encouragingly.

ROSE walked softly into the little side ward and sat on the chair by the bed.

Mrs Duncan looked asleep at first. She lay quiet and still. Rose's breathing seemed to be the only sound in the room. She felt more alone than she had ever felt in her life before.

The doctor and Sister tiptoed in. Even their light foot steps startled Rose, so silent had the little room become. They whispered together softly and went away. A moment or two later they returned, noiselessly wheeling in some apparatus to supply measured drips into the sick woman's arm.

The old woman was stirred to protest.

"Don't let them fuss me," she pleaded weakly to Rose. "I'm tired. Tell them to let me be. . . ."

"Keep her steady," the doctor said firmly under his breath to Rose.

Some new power seemed to be given to Rose. She took the woman's free hand in hers.

"You're going to feel better soon," she urged in an undertone. "Just lie still."

Even to her own ears Rose sounded more confident than she felt.

"I don't want to get better," the tired voice said, and a tear rolled slowly down the withered cheek.

"Think of your family!" urged Rose and could have bitten out her tongue as she remembered what Sister had said. The poor old soul had no one in the world.

But apparently Mrs Duncan had misled them on that point.

"Aye, that's what I am doing," she muttered. "There's only my daughter, Maisie. A wilful, headstrong lass if ever there was one. A lot she'd care—if she knew!"

FOR a moment Rose felt too shocked to speak. Family bitterness was something she had never experienced.

"Mrs Duncan, do you mean your daughter doesn't know you're in hospital?" she asked incredulously.

"Maisie wouldn't care. She set her heart on a man I couldn't abide and took herself off when I tried to stop her ruining her life."

"Don't let her talk too much," Sister whispered in passing.

But now that Rose's gentle prompting had broken through the barrier of loneliness, Mrs Duncan had to get the whole burden of her worry off her chest. No one could have stemmed the flow.

Rose looked up and found that Roger Buchan had joined them.

"Don't let me disturb you," he said in an undertone. "I was sent to report on the drips."

"Mrs Duncan hasn't let her daughter know she is ill," Rose explained. "I don't think it's fair of her, do you? I know how I'd feel if my mother did that to me."

Roger looked from one to the other.

"I'd feel the same," he said simply. "Tell me about it."

"She defied me," mumbled the old lady miserably. "She—she's no daughter of mine any more. She can go her—her own way, and I'll go mine!"

ROSE passed her tongue over dry lips.

"I'm sure your daughter is longing to make it up by now," she persisted.

"That's not likely!" scoffed Mrs Duncan, but Rose could see she was weakening.

"Where does she work?" Roger asked.

The People's Friend Annual

"At the new jam factory, but it's no good. . . ."

"Nurse and I think it's worth trying," he said firmly.

"Look," said Rose, patting the old woman's hand. "As soon as I come off duty I'll ring up the factory and ask to speak to her."

"Better still," Roger cut in, "I can borrow a car from my room-mate. Nurse and I will go round and speak to her and bring her along to see you."

Rose's heart missed a beat. Her eyes shone as she looked expectantly at the patient. But she seemed unmoved.

"You—you're wasting your time."

"We'll see about that!" Roger said lightly.

He moved away to the door.

"I'll be back," he said quietly.

Mrs Duncan lapsed into a deep silence and didn't stir for some time.

"The trouble was I always wanted so much for Maisie," she said at last.

A fit of trembling seemed to wrack her from head to foot. Rose nearly lost her nerve. Then suddenly the trembling ceased. Mrs Duncan gave a weak smile.

"You won't forget, will you, Nurse?" she murmured and fell asleep.

Quietly Rose took her pulse. It was steadier and stronger than it had been for a long time.

It was nearly dawn when Dr Robinson looked in. He stood for a moment, gazing down at the tired lined face now relaxed in healthy sleep. Then he looked at Rose.

"Well done, Nurse!" he whispered.

Tears pricked Rose's eyes, but her chin went up. She felt several inches taller—not with pride, but with a new strength that had not been there before.

"I am a nurse," she thought confidently. "I am a nurse!"

TRUE to his word, Roger was waiting for her outside when she came off duty with the car he had borrowed.

They reached the factory soon after the girls had clocked in. It took them some time to locate Mrs Duncan's daughter. As they had expected, she was terribly upset when they told her about her mother.

"Oh, how awful!" she gasped. "I'll have a word with the foreman and I'll come at once."

"I feel dreadful," she told them later in the car. "You see, Mum was right about Alfred. I'd have told her I was having second thoughts if she hadn't gone on so about him. I felt I had to stand up for him. He wasn't as bad as she made out, and fair's fair."

"Don't worry," Roger said soothingly. "Just remember she needs you now and tell her you will come home. That is, if you are going to."

"Of course. If she wants me."

Soon they were at the hospital. Quickly Roger led the way up to the side ward where Mrs Duncan lay. At the doorway he stood aside to let Maisie go in alone.

For a moment she hesitated. Then, quietly she took a step to the bed.

Hearing the sound, the old woman turned her head. Her tired eyes lit up with joy.

"Maisie," she whispered brokenly.

"Oh, Mother!"

As Maisie ran and knelt beside the bed, Roger turned to Rose.

"Everything's going to be all right," he whispered. "Let's leave them alone."

Taking Rose by the arm, he led her down the corridor.

"Let's go for something to eat," he suggested. "I'm famished. It's been quite a night."

Rose hesitated.

"Why don't you come home with me? I'm sure Mother could rustle up some ham and eggs. I'd like you to meet her. I—I think you'd like her."

"I know I would," Roger said quietly. "She's got a very nice daughter."

MRS HUNTER was delighted to see her daughter so unexpectedly, and it was clear that Roger made a good impression. She soon learned that his home was in Orkney and that his lodgings were dreary. She also discovered that he had just sat his Finals.

"And when will you know the result?" she asked.

"Friday."

"How exciting. You will come and tell us, won't you? I shall be so interested."

He looked at Rose.

"I—I was hoping that if I've passed, Rose would come out with me to celebrate. I know she has to be on duty, but we might have an early supper somewhere."

Rose flushed with pleasure.

"I'd love to."

She could hardly wait for Friday. The results were up before she came off duty. Roger's name was second on the list. She stared at it, excitement catching at her throat.

She felt a hand at her elbow and turned to meet Roger's eyes.

"Good-morning, Doctor Buchan," she said demurely, her eyes shining.

"Good-morning, Nurse Rose. How about our date tonight?"



Dressed in her gown of richest green, now Summer reigns o'er all.

by
Rachel
Macarthur



THAT WOULD SHOW HIM!

ELINOR BURNETT shivered in the six o'clock darkness of a Glasgow evening.

The afternoon drizzle had settled into a steady downpour of rain and she walked quickly along the crescent that was now almost all service houses. Two minutes later she was inside her own large bed-sitting-room, putting a match to the fire she had laid that morning.

Then she paused to glance at the letter she had collected from the rack in the hall. Her heart warmed at the sight of the Inverluig postmark and Miss Timpson's large round handwriting—two things which still spelt "home" to her. She put it on the mantelpiece to read later at her leisure.

As she prepared her meal she thought for a moment of how lovely it would be to come home to a fire and a hot meal.

Then she shrugged impatiently. You couldn't have everything, and how many girls had her position as chief cashier at the age of twenty-five? A warm glow of satisfaction spread through her as she thought of her recent

promotion. It had been worth all the hard work of the past five years.

Set against that, the trivial discomforts of coming home to a cold room and an uncooked meal weren't important. No, she hadn't much to complain about, she told herself as she pulled the table over to the fire and sat down at last to enjoy her tea.

Then remembering her letter, she took it down from the mantelpiece and opened it.

There were three closely-written pages. Elinor read them through once, then went back to read them again more slowly. Her brows puckered slightly over the last page.

"And now, my dear," Miss Timpson had written, "a bit of news I'm both sorry and glad to give you. My sister Jess in Aberdeen is needing me, and it's not sensible for the pair of us to be apart. I won't say it hasn't taken a lot of thinking about, but that's behind me now.

"Before I leave Tappet Farm I would like to have a wee gathering of my bairns, or as many as I can get together. There'll be few enough of them. You'll be having the holiday on Monday, the 25th. Will you come up to me for the week-end? Cissie Roy and her husband and baby will be staying, but I have room for you all. . . ."

Elinor blinked hard over the lines, then laid the pages down. Inverluig without her dear Miss Timpson? It didn't bear thinking about. It was impossible to think of one without the other.

She folded the pages and put them back in the envelope. Whatever happened she would go to Tappet Farm on the 25th. Nothing must come before that.

SEATED at the front of the bus, Elinor watched the scenery change from busy streets to quiet countryside.

She had thought a great deal about Inverluig and Miss Timpson during the three weeks since she had received her letter.

Elinor's earliest recollection of Miss Timpson was in her first year at school, the year her mother had died.

The school stood no more than fifty yards along the road from Tappet Farm where Miss Timpson, almost middle-aged then, worked for her father in both house and farm.

Somehow Timmy, as they had all called her, had taken it upon herself to "mother" the children who came in from the outlying crofts and farms. One severe winter she arranged with the parents that, instead of carrying their "pieces" the children would have a plate of hot soup in the farm kitchen.

To Elinor she had been a second mother. And without Timmy how would she have got through those dark days when her father died six years ago?

For many years now Timmy had been alone, still running the farm with the help of a good grieve. Once, years ago when her brother-in-law in Aberdeen had died, there had been the possibility that she might stay with her widowed sister. But Timmy had decided she could never leave Tappet Farm and "her bairns."

But now she was going to. There would be strangers in the old house and strangers at the farm. There would be no Timmy there with open door and

eager arms to welcome Elinor when she managed to get away from her busy life in town. She would never again be able to think of Tappet Farm and Inverluig as "home."

The haze of dusk was blurring the outline of hedges and hills but Elinor's heart warmed at the sight of every familiar turn of the road. As they came over the top of Ploughman's Brae and across the bridge she jumped to her feet and pulled her case from the rack. The bus drew slowly to a halt.

There was Timmy at the roadside waiting. Elinor received a warm hug, then was held at arm's length as Timmy inspected her.

"Still managing to keep clean and bonnie in all that city dirt, lass," she exclaimed. "I don't know how you do it."

"What the folk in my hygienic office would say if they heard that, Timmy, I don't like to think!" laughed Elinor. "I don't know how you manage to stay so young-looking with all the work you have to do."

It was the only private conversation she had with Timmy that night. Stepping into the farmhouse was like stepping back to the years when her whole life had been bounded by Inverluig and her friends there.

The big kitchen was filled with laughter and warmth and friendship.

There was Cissy Anderson—now Cissy Roy—still shy and sweet, with a big quiet husband and a plump laughing baby. There were the two Gilchrist boys down from their farm at the head of the glen. There was Meg Johnston with her husband, Frank Ritchie, who had been at school with the rest of them.

And behind them all was a tall broad-shouldered young man with dark hair, who came forward smiling to take Elinor's hand in a firm grasp.

"It's little Ellie—quite grown up!" he said in a pleased voice.

"Michael!" It was all she said, in a voice she hardly recognised as her own.

Then Timmy was urging her to take off her hat and coat, for tea was almost ready, and the opportunity to say a welcoming word to Michael Robson was lost.

TIMMY looked round the table and her smile was slightly wistful.

"Seven. Out of the years, only seven of you within hailing distance." She turned to Elinor. "But what do you think of Michael being here? He'd be the last one you'd expect to see."

"He certainly is. You didn't prepare me for this surprise." It was Elinor Burnett, the poised and successful business woman who was speaking now.

"It was a complete surprise to us all," said Timmy. "He just walked into Inverluig the other day without any warning."

"As if he'd just been away in Australia for the week-end, I suppose?" Elinor suggested.

Michael smiled at her across the table.

"And that's just what it feels like now that I'm back. Not a stone in Inverluig has changed and Timmy is no different from the day I left. But things have happened to the rest of you. Cissy and Meg both married and Ellie—well, what's happened to you?" he asked.

"Nothing much out of the ordinary," Elinor replied lightly. "You're

the one who has had adventures. You'll have to tell us all about them."

But afterwards, gathered round the glowing fire in the sitting-room, it wasn't of the present they spoke.

"Do you remember. . . ." "One thing I'll never forget. . . ." "Timmy, tell me now. . . ." Question followed question as the memories flowed.

Sitting well back in a corner of the big settee, Elinor was quieter than the rest. She was still annoyed with herself for that one moment of emotion when she came so unexpectedly face to face with Michael Robson.

She had thought nothing remained of that unhappy time when her whole world had been bounded by Michael, and she had loved him with the blind devotion of a first love.

Michael had never guessed at her feeling for him.

She remembered the way he had spoken to her the last time they met.

It was three days before he was to leave Inverluig to try his luck in Australia. As the youngest of three brothers he felt there was no room for him on his father's farm. He had smiled warmly down at Elinor as she had shyly wished him good luck.

"Thanks, Ellie, I'll need all the good wishes. And I won't forget the folk at home who've wished me well. It'll be good to picture you all here at Inverluig—you down at Tappet Farm with Timmy, going round helping every lame dog in the district. That's how I'll always remember you, Ellie."

Elinor had been resentful of his assumption that she would stay at home. Why should he imagine she would be content with life in Inverluig?

Naturally it had long since ceased to matter. But something of that old resolution awoke in her again. It would be interesting to let him know that her life had been quite as successful as his, in its way.

BUT Elinor got little satisfaction out of letting Michael know about her successful career. He did not seem particularly impressed.

It was the following afternoon before they heard each other's news. The day was fine and Cissie decided after lunch that she would like to visit her friends in Inverluig whom she seldom saw now that she was living in Ayrshire.

When the little car had swung out of the yard on to the hill road, Miss Timpson asked if Elinor could entertain herself for half an hour while she attended to some urgent letters.

Elinor was glancing idly through a magazine in front of the sitting-room fire when Michael Robson walked in.

"I hope I'm not disturbing you," he said. "Timmy said you might talk to me while she gets the odd jobs done."

Elinor closed the magazine and dropped it on the settee beside her.

"You're not disturbing me," she said. "So far I've just been turning over the pages. I'd be much more interested to hear some of your adventures. We didn't get the chance last night."

He seemed reluctant at first to speak about himself but Elinor's questions drew him out. Soon he was giving her a graphic picture of his five years in various sheep stations up and down the great continent of Australia.

"Inverluig must seem very small to you now," Elinor suggested.

The People's Friend Annual

"I think home always looks good no matter what its size. And, of course, it's grand to see old friends again." He paused and looked across at her with a slight frown. "What do you think of this move of Timmy's?" he asked abruptly. "Is she doing the right thing? Will she be able to manage the business side of it herself?"

"We may not like the idea because we don't want her to leave Inverluig. But I'm sure she's doing the right thing," Elinor said slowly. "Tappet Farm will soon be too much for her to manage."



"I suppose you're right," Michael agreed reluctantly. "But do you see her getting all this fixed up on her own—finding a tenant, settling the terms, organising a removal, selling off what she doesn't want to take with her? Frankly, I don't."

"Oh, I'll attend to all that for her. She knows she needn't worry about that part of it," Elinor spoke confidently.

"I'd have thought this was a man's job, but I suppose nothing now is a man's job any more than a woman's. I scarcely know you, Ellie, you're so efficient nowadays."

That Would Show Him!

His quick smile checked the retort that sprang to her lips.

"Perhaps you just didn't notice before how efficient I was, Michael," she said, laughing.

Michael shrugged.

"There seem to be a lot of things I didn't notice five years ago. But don't forget, Ellie, if either Timmy or you need me, I'm at your service."

"I'll remember, Michael." She didn't smile, but with inward amusement she saw he didn't really believe she would be able to handle the letting of the lodge and farm and all the business it entailed. She would show him!

THE happy week-end was over. The Roys and their plump laughing baby set out for home on the Monday forenoon. Elinor, preparing to leave by the early evening bus, had a few last words with Timmy.

"Now, you've no need to worry, Timmy," she said. "I'll see the lawyer tomorrow and arrange to advertise for a tenant."

"That'll be a load off my mind," Miss Timpson sighed. "I'll admit I'll be glad to leave things to you, Elinor. But will you be able to spare the time?"

"Of course I will," said Elinor.

They both turned to the window at the sound of a car coming into the yard and saw Michael's little red sports car drawing to a halt at the door. A minute later he was in the room.

"I took a sudden notion to see the bright lights of Glasgow. Would you come as my passenger, Ellie?"

Elinor's hesitation was lost in Timmy's exclamations of satisfaction. Soon she was sitting by Michael's side in the low front seat of the car. It was a pleasant run and they chatted easily as they drove through the growing darkness.

Anxiously Elinor considered what kind of impromptu meal she could offer. But when she extended her invitation, Michael disposed of the difficulty.

"When you've been away for the week-end? No, I've got a better idea. We'll eat out somewhere and you can invite me on some future occasion."

That supper in one of the quieter city restaurants was the first of several meetings Elinor had with Michael during the next few weeks.

On one occasion they went to the cinema and on another to the theatre. After the theatre Elinor invited him to her flat for coffee.

Sitting together by the fire in Elinor's comfortable room, they discovered a new sense of companionship.

"I know I'm asking for trouble, Ellie," Michael grinned, "but this seems to me your right background rather than steel desks and calculating machines and telephones."

For some reason Elinor did not give the retort he expected. And after he had set out on the hour's run back to Inverluig, she sat for a long time gazing into the fire.

Was it wise to let this friendship deepen, to risk suffering again as she had done long ago when, unasked, she had given him all her heart? But that would not happen again, she told herself.

Then Elinor gave herself a mental shake. She was not going to let Michael Robson make her unhappy again.

The People's Friend Annual

TAPPET FARM had been advertised for some time, but there had only been two inquiries. Neither of them had come to anything.

On his next visit to Glasgow, Michael told Elinor that Timmy was wondering if she might be forced to offer it for sale.

"But she can't bring herself to do it. She seems to think she might want to come back one day." He looked thoughtful. "I'd certainly like to see it settled one way or the other before I leave Inverluig."

"Then you're going back to Australia?" Elinor asked.

"Well, it rather looks that way. My holiday can't go on much longer, and there isn't room for me on Dad's place with both my brothers there." He smiled at her but there was anxiety in his eyes.

He changed the subject abruptly, going on to tell her she must be sure to come to Inverluig on the following Saturday. There was to be a party and a presentation for Timmy in the schoolroom that afternoon.

It was arranged so far in advance of her departure because Mr Shaw, the minister, was going off to Canada for six months to visit his daughter. And, of course, there could be no presentation without Mr Shaw, for he had known Timmy longer than any of them.

It seemed to Elinor that life was much too full of problems these days. An unusual mood of depression settled on her. Several things had turned up to claim Michael's attention and he hadn't been in town for a whole week.

She was worried, too, because there was still no sign of a tenant for the farm. She decided she would see the lawyer again and instruct him to advertise more widely.

On the morning she planned to make this call, she received one of Timmy's rambling letters.

"You'll be here for Saturday, of course, but come on Friday night if you can. I think I'll have a grand bit of news for you. It looks as if Michael's going to settle all the worry about the farm for us but it's not definite yet. I'll tell you all about it at the week-end, I hope."

Elinor read the letter again, wondering if she had perhaps misunderstood it. It didn't tell her much, but what it told was enough, and she grew angry.

So Michael was going to get the farm business settled was he? He had decided she wasn't capable of doing it properly.

Later that morning she went round to the lawyer's office, still seething inwardly. In her impatient mood she would not wait for the lift but began to mount the stairs quickly.

On the second landing a tall man was closing the lawyer's door behind him. It was Michael. So he wasn't losing much time in getting the business settled for Timmy!

"Hello, Ellie. I didn't expect to meet you at this time of day," he said, looking confused.

Had she been in the least prepared for the meeting, Elinor might have chosen her words differently. But before she had time to think, she had replied icily:

"No doubt! Naturally you would come at a time you wouldn't expect to see me."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Michael, angry in his turn.

"Obviously you would have preferred me not to know you were going to

That Would Show Him!

sort out things for Timmy since I was doing them so badly. But it's what you expected all along, of course."

She did not wait for his reply, but entered the lawyer's office.

"You've called at just the right moment, Miss Burnett," said Mr Arnott, the lawyer, smiling at her. "I think we've got your tenant for you."

"Then you've had another inquiry?" Her voice was eager. She'd get the business settled yet before Michael Robson could interfere.

"Yes," returned Mr Arnott, rubbing his hands. "It's a trial tenancy for three years. Perhaps you met our client on your way in. He's a local man and you're sure to know him. His name is Michael Robson."

THE little schoolroom was packed. From her chair near the door Elinor saw that every face was familiar to her, each one part of Inverluig and part of her own life. Most familiar were the three at the table facing her—old Dr Roxburgh, Mr Shaw, the minister, and, dearest of all, Miss Timpson.

The old doctor made the presentation—a fine pigskin handbag and an etching of Inverluig as seen from the top of Ploughman's Brae. Then Timmy stood up to say her word of thanks. Though the flush on her cheeks and the glimmer of tears in her eyes showed how moved she was, her voice was clear and steady.

Elinor's fingers were gripped together in her lap. As she glanced round the room, watching the faces of the people who loved Timmy, her eyes met those of Michael Robson.

Was it scorn she saw in them, she wondered, or merely indifference? If only she could have told herself that it didn't matter! And now Timmy's words were reaching into her confused mind.

"I'll come back to Inverluig one day, you'll see. There'll be a but-and-ben somewhere about for Jess and me. I gave my heart to Inverluig a long time ago, and when I give my heart once, I give it for always."

There was a moment's silence, then applause and clearing of throats. Several women rose to attend to the tea that was to be served in the sitting-room of the schoolhouse.

Suddenly Elinor knew she must get away. She must be alone for a little while before she could face the greetings and laughter and chatter.

The light was beginning to fade as she walked up the well-trodden moor track that began at the school door. At the stunted old oak tree she turned and looked back over the moor and the narrow dipping road behind it. In the quietness here perhaps she could face her mistakes and find a way of putting them right.

How had Timmy learned what it was she wanted of life? Had she, too, made mistakes when she was a girl? Thinking of that strong kind face, it was difficult to imagine her troubled by doubts and uncertainties. Elinor found herself repeating Timmy's words, hearing them as an answer to her doubts of the past few days.

"When I give my heart once, I give it for always."

Yes, she was like Timmy. She had convinced herself that her love for Michael Robson had been a girlish experience that had ended when he had gone out of her life.

And yet it had needed only the thoughtless mistake of a moment to show

The People's Friend Annual

her how wrong she had been. It was nothing more than foolish vanity that had made her accuse Michael as she had done.

She saw the door of the schoolhouse open and a man come out. She knew at once it was Michael and knew, too, he had come to find her.

His first words gave no hint of annoyance.

"I hope you don't mind my following you, Ellie. It seemed the only way of getting a word with you on your own."

"I had to come out for a breath of air," Elinor said.

He swung round suddenly.

"I came to find out what you meant by your remarks the other day," he said in his direct fashion. "I understand I've offended you, but I don't know quite what I've done."

Elinor's lips tightened. She spoke in a strained voice, not looking at him.

"It was a misunderstanding, Michael. I owe you an apology which I hope you'll accept. I thought you had been seeing Mr Arnott and trying to get Timmy's affairs settled since I didn't seem to be making any progress."

"I see. I wondered if that might be it." He was thoughtful for a moment. When he spoke again, his voice was gentle as she had never heard it before. "Ellie, does your job really mean as much as all that to you? Is it more important than say, all the things Timmy stands for?"

"I thought it was, but a moment ago I discovered it isn't."

Michael gave a deep sigh of relief.

"Thank goodness for that! If your answer had been the other way, I don't know what I'd have done about taking over Tappet Farm. Because I'm hoping you'll join me there one day, Ellie."

For a moment there was a silence filled with happiness. Then Michael held out his hand and she put hers into it.

"There'll be a cup of tea waiting for us," he said. "Maybe we'd better go for it."

And as they turned and walked hand in hand down the moor track together Elinor remembered Timmy's words and knew she, too, had given her heart for always.



Restless, ever-changing sea, girdling our island home.

As The Bells Rang Out

by
MOLLY
GAIR



THERE was a special service last Sunday evening at St Catherine's Church in the little fishing village of Kincala in Banffshire.

Most of the congregation were newcomers to the district. So few of them were young married couples, and others were single men employed on the construction of the new power station on the moor above the village. So the service held no particular significance for them.

They merely thought how nice the church looked, decorated with a lovely display of spring flowers. And how much better it was going to be

The People's Friend Annual

with a peal of bells installed in the belfry instead of the single, heavy bell whose mournful toll echoed across the bay each Sunday.

About half-past five the tall figure of the minister, the Rev. John Carr, walked slowly across the manse garden, through the wicket gate and into the churchyard. There was a surprising warmth in the sun for late April. The sea was calm and blue, with the tide far out, leaving a wide stretch of wet, glistening sand. The bay looked wonderfully peaceful.

But the minister wasn't deceived. Not many days ago he'd watched giant waves thundering against the grey cliffs, and seen the little jetty disappear from view time and again as the sea surged over it. Then, as now, he thought of a night at the end of September thirty years ago, when George Graham had been swept off that jetty by a huge wave and drowned.

John Carr saw that happen, and he never passed the white memorial stone in the churchyard without pausing for a moment and wondering. Was Colin Murray responsible for that man's death?

But on this quiet, April evening the minister's kindly grey eyes no longer looked puzzled as they glanced at George Graham's tombstone. The mystery had been cleared up now, and Mr Carr's heart was filled with a strange mixture of gladness and sorrow.

Continuing his slow walk to the church door, where he was in the habit of waiting to welcome the people who came to worship, Mr Carr's thoughts went back to the first time he'd preached here.

He was a young man of twenty-five then, newly ordained and full of an earnest desire to do something really worth while with his life. The Rev. Arthur Murray's invitation to him to spend the autumn holiday week-end at Kincala came as a welcome surprise.

Arthur Murray was twenty years older than John Carr, a tall, powerfully-built man with red hair and vivid blue eyes. They'd met at a conference, and liked each other instantly. Despite the difference in their ages, they had a lot in common.

But there was one thing about the older man which surprised John Carr. How could he, educated and vigorous as he was, be content to spend his life in a tiny fishing village?

"I went for a holiday to Kincala when I was a lad," Arthur Murray explained. "And met a girl there. She was a bare-legged child in a cotton frock, with her hair in pigtails. But I went back to Kincala again and again. Not long after I was ordained, the minister of St Catherine's died, and I applied for the living. And there I waited for Nora to grow up and marry me."

"You've never been anywhere else?" John Carr asked.

With a smile Arthur Murray shook his head.

"No," he admitted. "Nora and I settled down in the manse, and we have one son, Colin. He'll be ten next birthday." Arthur Murray's eyes shone with pride.

Then, as though afraid of boring his listener with this family gossip, he gave the invitation abruptly.

"Why not come and see us at the autumn holiday? Stay the week-end. You'll do the journey easily in a couple of hours from Aberdeen. You can take evening service. The folk will be delighted to hear a fresh young voice."

Curiosity more than anything prompted John Carr to accept the invitation.

As The Bells Rang Out

HIS first impression of Kincala was not a happy one. A smirr of rain partly obscured the cliffs so that as he drove towards the village in his small car he got a glimpse of grey, sullen sea and a cluster of fishing boats sheltering behind the curved arm of the jetty. Oddly-shaped cottages with slated roofs straggled up the hill towards the church.

So this was Kincala!

"And that's St Catherine's Church," John Carr murmured to himself. The height and majesty of the belfry surprised him. It suggested a fine peal of bells.

The welcome he received at the manse more than compensated for the dreary drive along the coast road. Nora Murray was quick to join her husband in greeting their guest, and John Carr thought how lucky his friend was to have such a charming wife. She was small and slight, with wavy brown hair and a pair of gentle, dark eyes.

And, of course, there was Colin.

Colin had a snub nose and plenty of freckles. His face was round, good-humoured and frank. As far as John Carr could see, the only feature he inherited from his parents was a pair of vivid blue eyes like those of his father.

High tea was served in the dining-room, which was warm and cosy with a big log fire burning in the open hearth. It was a memorable meal for John Carr, for he was not the only guest at the manse that evening.

Morag Sinclair sat opposite him beside her father, the village doctor.

Morag was twenty. Born and brought up in Kincala, she'd kept house for her father since her mother died two years earlier. John Carr thought it a pity that a girl as pretty as blue-eyed, flaxen-haired Morag should lead such a narrow life.

But after the meal, when her father and the minister were absorbed in their customary Saturday evening game of chess, Morag talked to John. And he began to change his ideas about life in this quiet place.

At last he said with a smile, "You make it sound like one big, happy family here in Kincala!"

Morag shook her head gravely.

"A big family, yes," she allowed. "But not always a happy one. That would be unnatural. No family is happy all the time. We have our ups and downs because that's the way of things all through life. We'd get very bored if it was all plain sailing."

Dr Sinclair looked up suddenly from the chess-board and took off his glasses.

"Your talk of sailing and families, Morag, reminds me I'd better call on Mrs Kenneth Graham on the way home."

"I hear that husband of hers went off to Buckie this morning in his old cockle-shell of a boat," the minister remarked. "You'd think he'd have more sense than to take chances, with his wife expecting her first child. I don't care much for the weather. The glass has been falling all day."

Dr Sinclair shrugged his shoulders.

"He'll probably stay there if it gets worse. Or come back by road, perhaps."

He paused, then went on reflectively.

"I'm sure he went off in a hurry so that he'll be out of the way when the

The People's Friend Annual

baby comes. His brother, George, was the same. He went off just before poor young Tom was born and stayed away two weeks, just when his wife needed him most. There seems to be a streak of cowardice in the Grahams."

The doctor stopped abruptly as he saw young Colin's wide questioning eyes on him. He was annoyed with himself as he realised he'd said too much. Nine-year-old boys have sharp ears and inquiring minds! He should have been more careful.

For the rest of the evening Colin sat quietly by the fire, gazing thoughtfully into the flames.

John Carr and Morag Sinclair were quiet, too. But they were discovering the new delightful happiness which comes to two young people who are falling in love.

THE toll of a single bell-note, deep, clear and resounding, woke John Carr on that September Sunday morning.

For a moment he lay still, recalling with pleasure the events of the previous day, and enjoying the thought of seeing Morag Sinclair again today. She would be in church for both morning and evening services, and afterwards she was coming to supper at the manse.

The big, Bourdon bell clanged again loudly. John Carr was surprised. So there was no peal of bells at St Catherine's!

And so that unhappy day began. The wind, blowing strongly from the south-west, gathered froths of white foam on the crests of waves breaking along the shore. By the time the Manse folk were ready for evening service it had reached gale force.

In spite of the weather, the pews were well filled. As John Carr looked down upon the broad, kindly faces of the fisher-folk waiting to hear his sermon, he began to understand the affection which Morag and his friend, Arthur Murray, had for Kincaid.

At the end of the service, John stood in the porch beside Arthur Murray and shook hands with the villagers as they left the church. The minister, as usual, had a kindly word for each of them.

Supper was a casual meal at the manse on Sunday evenings. Colin didn't appear in the dining-room, and if he hadn't gone up to his room to fetch some snapshots to show Morag, John Carr would have presumed the boy had gone to bed. But as he reached the landing he saw Colin standing there dressed in rubber boots and a shiny, black oilskin coat. He held a sou'-wester in his hand.

"Hello! Going out?" John Carr asked in surprise.

Colin's round face was flushed. He nodded, murmuring vaguely about "going to see if the boat's all right."

During the afternoon Colin had taken John down to the bay, and showed him proudly a small varnished dinghy lying on the slipway.

Understanding the lad's pride in the trim little craft, and thinking this was what had caused his restlessness in church, John said: "I'm sure it will be safe enough. The tide will not come up as far as that surely? But I'll come with you, if you like, to make sure it's all right."

For a moment Colin looked confused.

"No, thanks," he said quickly. "I won't be long. You won't tell anyone where I've gone!"

As The Bells Rang Out

"I'll not breathe a word," John Carr promised. "But hurry back. And be careful! That wind's terribly strong."

But Colin was gone before he had even completed his sentence.

IT must have been half an hour later that the four people in the dining-room heard the church bell. Its deep note, clang-clang, clang-clang, rang forebodingly for several minutes.

The Rev. Arthur Murray was on his feet and hurrying out of the room long before the sound began to die.

Nora Murray's face was pale as she, too, rose swiftly and followed her husband.

Morag Sinclair turned startled eyes to John Carr. She remembered he was a stranger, and so couldn't understand what was happening.

"The ringing of the church bell used to be a danger signal. It hasn't been used for that purpose for years. Not since the telephone came to the village. But perhaps with the gale the wires might be down. Perhaps there is something wrong."

But the telephone in the hall was in working order. The minister was just replacing the receiver and his face was grim.

"I wonder if someone's playing a prank," he muttered. "I'm going to see." He grabbed a coat from the hallstand.

It was a black oilskin, and the sight of it reminded John Carr of Colin. If the lad was down at the jetty, the tolling of the bell might frighten him. John, too, struggled into his coat.

"I'm going down to the shore," he said.

"I'll come with you," Morag offered.

So they went out together, holding hands as they faced into the wind.

There were several people on the road to the jetty, but John Carr was disturbed when he realised there was no sign of young Colin.

Then suddenly there were warning cries from the people around.

"Come back, George," shouted someone. "You can't see anything out there. It's as black as pitch!"

George Graham, in his anxiety about his brother, Kenneth, was sure he could see a boat trying to make for shelter. He stepped on to the jetty just as a huge wave crashed against it. A wall of green water surged and swirled over the stonework. Then it drained away into the ocean, leaving the jetty clean and glistening.

And of George Graham there was no sign!

Dr Sinclair was at the manse when Morag and John Carr returned. His lined face was grave. News of what had happened on the jetty had reached him as he came away from the cottage after delivering Mrs Kenneth Graham's baby daughter.

"But who rang the church bell?" asked Morag. "Was it someone giving the danger signal?"

"It was Colin," Dr Sinclair told her quietly. "His father found him lying on the floor beside the belfry stairs. He must have slipped, or else the bell rope caught him and knocked him off his balance."

Upstairs the minister was questioning his young son.

But all Colin would say was: "I didn't do it."

His father's face grew grave and unhappy at his repeated denials. Nora

The People's Friend Annual

Murray bent protectively over her son as he sobbed : " I didn't do it. I didn't do it."

At last the minister straightened himself with a sigh. Leaving his wife to quieten Colin, he went down to the living-room.

Although he was controlling himself, his face showed how angry he was.

Morag Sinclair, her face strained and anxious, placed a gentle hand on his arm.

" Mr Murray! Don't be hard on him!" she pleaded. " He didn't know the church bell was used as a danger signal in the old days."

" That's not the point," the minister insisted. " He denies ringing it! And I found him there, not a yard from the bell rope!"

John Carr couldn't interfere. He was only a guest in the house, and not even a close friend of the family. But his heart echoed Morag's words when she said : " Colin's only nine years old, Mr Murray. And he's frightened now. When he's got over the shock he'll tell you what really happened."

But young Colin Murray kept stubbornly silent. John Carr left Kincala the next day without seeing him, but in a letter he received later that week from Morag she told him Colin was to be sent away to boarding-school.

THIRTY years have passed since that unhappy Sunday. John and Morag celebrated their silver wedding a few weeks ago. And last Sunday was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Rev. John Carr's induction as minister of St Catherine's Church. His friend, Arthur Murray, had retired early owing to ill-health, and the villagers were glad to welcome John Carr in his place.

They had given much thought as to how they could best show their appreciation to their minister for his twenty-five years' loyal service to the parish. It was finally decided to raise money to purchase a peal of bells. Mr Carr was taken into their confidence, and the fund was opened.

There was not much wealth in Kincala. The task might have proved too difficult had it not been for the anonymous gift of quite a large sum of money. But the minister knew who it came from. It was from Tom Graham.

Mr Carr had been reluctant at first to accept the gift from a cripple, whose only means of livelihood came from the sale of handwoven tweeds and scarves which he made in his little cottage on the coast road. But now, as the first peal rang out across the bay on that warm April evening, John Carr was glad he'd done as Tom asked.

People were coming quickly up the path, and each one of them looked up at the belfry from whence the joyful sound was coming.

Tom Graham came swinging along on his crutches, his thin face beaming with happiness.

" Well, Tom ! Does that sound please you?" the minister greeted him.

" Aye ! That it does, sir !" was the satisfied reply as Tom went into church.

It would be a few minutes yet before the service began. Time for Tom Graham to think back to the events which led up to this moment. To remember the round, freckled face of Colin Murray and the excited sparkle in his blue eyes when he dared Tom to climb the church tower.

Tom had never been strong like other boys. When he went to school he wore an iron support on his right leg, and this prevented him playing games.

As The Bells Rang Out

If it hadn't been for Colin taking the frail, dark-haired lad under his wing, Tom would have been ignored by the others. So it's only natural that he became devoted to Colin.

Tom Graham would have done anything in the world to please Colin Murray. But while his friend took a mischievous delight in daring other boys to prove their courage he was always very solicitous as far as Tom was concerned. This riled Tom.

Young as he was, he recognised compassion in Colin's lively blue eyes, and it angered him. One day, he vowed, he'd make Colin dare him to do something really wild. Then they'd see he was as clever as the others.

Walking home from school with Colin one Friday evening the chance came.

"The church clock's three minutes slow," Colin Murray remarked. "I wonder if Dad's noticed it."

The two boys stood for a moment gazing up at the clock face on the tower.

"How will he put it right?" Tom Graham asked.

"He'll move the hand when he goes up there to wind the clock." Colin thrust his hands deep into his pockets. "Dad's interested in clocks. That's why he likes to look after it himself. Sometimes I go up with him."

"You!" exclaimed Tom, wide-eyed. "You climb up there into the tower! Isn't it dark?"

Colin threw back his sandy head and laughed.

"I take my torch," he said proudly, for the new torch was his prize possession. It was a shiny, chromium one, and threw a long, bright beam. "We climb up the flight of wooden stairs to the clock room. It's fun to hear the clock ticking, and to stay there until it strikes. It makes ever such a loud noise. The church bell's at the top of the tower. There are bats up there," he added shudderingly.

"You're scared!" Tom taunted him, pleased to be the tease for once.

"I'm not!" Colin retorted indignantly. "I'm not scared of bats. Or of the dark either!"

"Neither am I," Tom replied warmly. "I could climb up into that belfry. Easily!"

For once, Colin Murray was off his guard.

"I bet you couldn't!" he retorted hotly. "I dare you to!"

"Right! I'll do it!" Tom declared firmly.

It was agreed that Colin would leave his torch behind when he went with his father on Sunday morning to attend to the clock. And Tom was to go up and find it after the service on Sunday evening.

BY Sunday evening, however, Tom's courage had dwindled away. To make matters worse, the wind was blowing at gale force. And his father was frantic with worry over his Uncle Kenneth, who had put to sea the previous morning in an unsound craft. His mother had gone to stay with Uncle Kenneth's wife. No one was thinking about young Tom.

It was quite easy to slip into church during the service and hide behind a curtain until the last of the evening worshippers had gone.

Even today, thirty years later, Tom Graham had no real recollection of how he climbed those creaky, wooden stairs. He carried a small torch, and with the aid of its feeble glow he reached the clock room. The ticking of the clock, combined with the shriek of the wind through the slats, made a

The People's Friend Annual

terrifying noise. Wide-eyed and gasping, he leaned against the wall to get his breath. Looking down he saw something glittering and stared at it for a terrified moment before he recognised Colin's new torch!

Thankfully Tom grabbed it and switched it on. But the strong ray only intensified the huge shadows. Pointing it downwards, he began his painful descent. As he reached the last step the torchlight fell on the white, anxious face of Colin Murray!

"I've done it! I've done it!" Tom cried triumphantly.

In his excitement he stumbled and the torch fell with a clatter. Tom caught hold of the bell rope to save himself from falling. It swung, jerking him off his feet, so that his leg-iron caught Colin a blow on the chest, knocking him down.

The church bell clanged loudly. It was still ringing as Tom plunged out of the church door. He didn't wait to see what happened to Colin.

Until his recent talk with John Carr, Tom had never told anyone about his visit to the belfry. Fear kept him silent, while Colin Murray took the blame. And when Colin left Kincala there seemed no point in confessing. Life was hard enough for Tom Graham. But in his heart he longed to make amends. And there was always the sound of that single, heavy bell to remind him of his guilt.

For a period of six years, however, it was silent. Thinking of that time, Tom Graham glanced up at the bronze plaque on the wall beside the pew in which he was sitting. It was the War Memorial, and today a vase of fresh yellow tulips stood on the shelf below it. Among other names engraved on the bronze was one Colin Murray, who was lost at sea during the Battle of the Atlantic while serving in the Merchant Navy. Colin was nineteen then!

As the last notes of the bells died away, the minister walked slowly up the aisle to begin evening service. There was a rustle of anticipation among the congregation.

The minister's eyes rested for a moment on the bowed head of his wife, Morag, who had been such a wonderful help to him.

Then he found Tom Graham. Tom's thin face wore the happy expression of a man at peace with himself, and any qualms the minister had about accepting his gift vanished for ever.



Snug beneath its guardian rock the busy harbour lies.

A black and white illustration of a man and a woman in a city setting. The woman, wearing a long coat and a hat, is holding a small object (possibly a shoe or a bag) and looking surprised or distressed. The man, in a suit, is leaning forward, looking down at the object on the ground. The background shows a city street with buildings and a fence.

by
Mary
Dunn

The girl was making for the pillar-box just below the window. That pillar-box was one of the few bright spots in Janet Ainslie's existence.

The window at which she sat for hours at a time, belonged to the lounge of Holly House, a small hotel catering for elderly ladies who needed special attention. Not that she was an invalid exactly. Her general health was

The People's Friend Annual

good, but owing to arthritis, she could hardly take a step alone. While the other old ladies could walk down to the shops or into the gardens in the Square, Mrs Ainslie had to stay put.

She did not miss the shopping. She did not even mind too much about not going to the gardens, as long as she could see them from the window.

There was only one thing that really hurt. That was to hear the bells ringing on Sundays and know she couldn't go to church. They awoke in her nostalgia for the past, for she was a minister's widow and all her life had been bound up in the church.

The girl was at the pillar-box now. Mrs Ainslie leaned forward to get a better look at her. Her intent gaze must have had an effect, for the girl glanced up and saw her. She smiled and gave a friendly wave before turning away again.

Quite excited, Mrs Ainslie waved back.

Miss Murchie, who was sitting at the window too, turned to her.

"A friend of yours?"

"Yes," Mrs Ainslie said without an instant's hesitation. "A friend of mine."

She watched the bright figure go across the top of the Square and into one of the terrace houses which was let out in rooms.

THE church bells were ringing next day as Kathleen Craig passed Holly House and saw again the face of the old lady she had waved to yesterday.

Kathleen was reminded of her own grandmother at home in Corrievale and she smiled and waved to her.

She walked on to the corner, carrying her Bible and hymn book. Today she was dressed in a coat with a fur collar, and a perky little hat. She had promised Gran that she would start going to church from her very first Sunday in Glasgow.

Neither Gran nor her parents were too sure about this new job as secretary to a girls' club. They wanted to keep her at home. So, of course, did George Duncan.

It was because of George that she had been so determined. When someone you had known all your life wanted to marry you and you were not sure if you loved him enough, what else was there to do but to be apart for a while?

It was a breezy winter day. As Kathleen neared the corner, a playful gust tore at her hat and lifted it from her head.

Before she had time to rescue it, a young man ran down some steps and picked it up. With a polite little bow he handed it to her.

"Oh, thank you!" Kathleen said, confused at his sudden appearance.

She felt on top of the world as she walked on, sensing that he was looking after her. Her cheeks were pink as she slipped into a back pew of the church round the corner.

She was early and the bells were still ringing, but soon they stopped and the organ began to play. Then a door opened and the choir came in. Somehow she was not surprised to see among the tenors the young man who had picked up her hymn book.

She went out quickly after the service. On the way back to her room she took a good look at the flatted house from which the young man had come.

There was a new-looking brass plate up. MARTIN ROBB, L.D.S., it read. So he was a dentist as well as a tenor singer and a rescuer of hymn books!

THAT afternoon Kathleen wrote to George. She put his address on the envelope in her large, clear handwriting—"Mr George Duncan, Lochview, Corrievale."

As she was stamping it, the stamp slipped off the straight.

"Oh dear, I do hope he doesn't think it means a kiss!" she thought as she remembered the language of stamps.

The afternoon was dry, though still breezy, as Kathleen set off for a stroll round the Square, taking the letter with her. Just at the pillar-box the wind caught her hat again. While she was saving it, the letter was blown from her hand. It danced down the pavement and she went after it. But someone got there first.

"Oh," Kathleen gasped. "That's the second time. What must you think of me?"

"I think," said Martin Robb, his blue eyes twinkling, "that you'd get on better without a hat, nice as that one is."

He glanced at the letter.

"I'll post this for you, shall I?"

As he slipped the letter into the box, Kathleen's cheeks burned, for he must have seen George's address and that stamp stuck on like a kiss!

"You really ought to take more care of your love letters," Martin teased her.

"It's not a love letter," Kathleen said earnestly. "The position of the stamp doesn't mean anything."

Glancing up she saw the old lady watching them and immediately waved.

"A friend of yours?" Martin asked.

"Yes, a friend."

"Then she's a friend of mine, too," and he gaily kissed his hand to the window.

"I'm sure that would give her a thrill!" laughed Kathleen.

She was right. Mrs Ainslie beamed across at Miss Murchie.

"Did you see that?"

"I certainly did." They watched the couple stroll off together. "It looks like a romance."

"Yes," Mrs Ainslie agreed. "Oh, I hope it is!"

TWO nights later Kathleen woke with an agonising toothache. In the morning it was slightly better, but after she got home at night the pain came back in full force.

She went round to Martin's.

At the door, she was faced with a pretty, pert little receptionist.

"Have you got an appointment?" she asked Kathleen.

"No, but my tooth is aching."

"Sorry, but we're full up. Would you care to make an appointment?"

"But couldn't I see him tonight, just for a minute?" Kathleen pleaded.

"Quite impossible," the girl told her firmly.

Just then the surgery door opened and Martin came out.

"Hello! What's the trouble?"

The People's Friend Annual

She told him.

"But I believe you are busy. I'll not delay you."

"I'm not as busy as all that."

He turned to the receptionist.

"Miss Lennox, you ought to have told me about this young lady. I won't have patients turned away!"

The girl flushed.

"Come in here," Martin told Kathleen. "My next patient is a bit late. I can attend to you now."

She stepped into the gleaming surgery and sat down in the chair.

"Open your mouth—wide!"

She sat still, soothed by his voice and the sure, gentle touch of his fingers. The nerve was exposed, but he offered to deaden it and put in a temporary filling.

"You'll have to come back, of course."

"I don't mind."

He came to the door with her and Kathleen could feel the baleful glance of the receptionist in the background.

"We needn't wait till the next appointment, of course," he said. "You'll be posting letters sometimes?"

She nodded, her eyes shining.

"And coming to church? Very good." Suddenly he was business-like again.

"Good-night then, Miss Craig!"

DAFFODIL time had come. The gardens were bright with their golden carpet and the trees had a shimmer of green as Mrs Ainslie looked out of the window. Today was Sunday again, and the church bells were ringing.

"If only I could see the inside of a church once again, to worship with the others and feel comforted!" she thought.

"Look," Miss Murchie said, "your two friends are on their way to church. They never miss a Sunday. And they seem always to post their letters at the same time, too. The romance seems to be flourishing!"

Just then the young couple looked up and waved. How happy they were! The April day looked even brighter where they walked.

Mrs Ainslie's eyes followed them till they disappeared round the corner. After the church service she would look for them again. She felt she had to be there to wave them God speed on their journey into love, perhaps into marriage. She had even put them into her prayers.

"Grant that their love may be fulfilled and that nothing will come between them," was her plea.

LETTERS to George Duncan were becoming more difficult to write. Every week Kathleen sat with blank paper before her, wondering what to say. She knew now for certain that she did not love George.

Struggling to write to him one Sunday afternoon, she made up her mind that she must tell him.

"Dear George, you ask me if there is anything the matter. Well, there is. I've been away from you for three months now and I still don't feel I could marry you. In fact, George, there is someone else."

The letter was not completed to her satisfaction till later in the week. She went out to post it, hoping for once that Martin would not see her. He did though. She had just slipped the letter into the box when he was by her side.

"Martin! Aren't you busy? I'm sure you must have patients."

"Dozens of them. But I had to see you, Kathleen. I told you I was buying a car. Well, it has come and I'm taking a half-holiday on Saturday, come what may. What's more, so are you."

She laughed. "Really?"

"Yes, and we're going down to Largs, or anywhere else you prefer."

Her eyes sparkled. "It sounds wonderful, Martin!"

"Then it's O K. Shall I call for you?"

"With a new car? I think I'd feel better if we just met here at the pillar-box."

"Right. Would two o'clock be too early?"

"I'll make it," she said breathlessly.

He went off, waving his hand gallantly to Mrs Ainslie at the window. Kathleen gave her usual cheerful wave, telling herself that she really must visit her some time.

SHE had to go to work on Saturday forenoon, but what was a few hours' work when so much happiness was to follow? She caught an early bus back and rushed upstairs to her room.

A letter was under the door. It must have come by the morning post after she left. It was from George.

"Dear Kath," she read. "I am sure you are making a mistake. I am coming to see you on Saturday first. Expect me about two o'clock."

He couldn't come here, to spoil her day with Martin! But she couldn't stop him now. She would be late for Martin, but she could hardly run off before two and leave George in the lurch.

She would have to telephone Martin and ask him to wait.

She ran down to the telephone in the hall and dialled his number, but it was his receptionist who replied.

"Mr Robb is very busy. No, he can't speak on the phone. He's with a patient. Will you leave a message?"

"Please ask Mr Robb if he can postpone Miss Craig's appointment this afternoon until—until three o'clock."

"But Mr Robb has no appointments for this afternoon!"

"This is a private appointment," Kathleen replied.

"I see. Very well, Miss Craig. I'll let him know."

Kathleen rushed upstairs again, snatched some food and put on her new lime green costume. In no time George would be here. Never had she felt less desire to see him.

THE hostility which Kathleen had sensed in Martin's young receptionist was only too real.

Until this Miss Craig appeared on the scene, Valerie Lennox had fancied her chances with her employer. Now she spitefully made up her mind to ignore the message.

Let him go to the appointed place and wait for the girl; if her non-appear-

The People's Friend Annual

ance ended their friendship, all the better ! So she went home for the afternoon without saying a word.

Martin rushed away to get his new car from the garage round the corner. He drove to the pillar-box and sat inside the car waiting expectantly.

Half past two came. Surely she wasn't going to let him down? Kathleen wasn't that kind. Perhaps he ought to ask at the house in case there was something wrong?

He was on his way there when he saw her coming down the steps. He stopped short, for she was not alone. A tall, country-looking young man was with her. Turning in the opposite direction, they walked down the road.

Martin turned away angrily. A name sprang into his mind. "George Duncan." He had almost forgotten about that envelope with the stamp stuck on like a kiss. Her country boy friend had turned up then, and her date with Martin Robb had been promptly forgotten.

"All right," thought Martin, "no girl gets a chance to do that to me a second time !"

He got into the car and drove away with a heavy heart.

How was he to know that Kathleen was only accompanying George to the bus stop? At last she had managed to persuade him that what she said in her letter was true. She was in love with someone else.

"You're quite sure, Kathleen?" he said at the stop.

"Quite sure. Good-bye George ! Give my love to everybody."

She waved him off. Walking back her spirits rose in anticipation of the happy hours ahead.

From a quarter to three she waited at the pillar-box, straining her eyes to see that new car, but no car came.

At last she went across to Martin's house, but there was no reply to her ring. He could not wait for her then. Perhaps he had taken some other girl with him? She walked away, her step heavy, her heart sad.

ANOTHER Sunday, and the church bells ringing. Mrs Ainslie could not understand it. At her window yesterday she had seen the young dentist waiting with his car and guessed whom he was waiting for. But she did not come.

At last he had presumably gone to look for her. The trees had so much foliage now that they hid him from sight. When he reappeared, he was walking quickly and angrily. Then he got into his car, banged the door and shot away. How strange !

Stranger still that the girl should turn up a little later and do her turn of waiting. Had there been some misunderstanding?

Now as she watched, the young man came out of his house on the way to church. He did not wait for the girl as usual, but hurried down the road without looking back.

When the girl came in her turn, she slowed down, looking expectantly at his house. Not seeing him, she turned quickly on her heel and went back again instead of going to church.

"Oh dear," thought Mrs Ainslie. "I hope this is not the end of it."

Kathleen had said to herself that Sunday, "If he's got some explanation, he'll be waiting as usual when I go to church."

But Martin was not waiting and she had not the heart to go alone.

"See You Saturday!"

If he did not want her, she would keep out of his way. He knew where she lived and could get in touch if he wanted. Perhaps tomorrow he would, or the next day?

Hope dwindled to zero during the next weeks. She walked the other way and posted her letters in a different pillar-box now.



The evenings were long. Kathleen was a good knitter and she kept herself busy. But the bed-jacket she was doing for Gran's birthday was going to be finished far too soon. She could do another in the time, but what would be the point of that?

"Unless I knew some other old lady——"

The People's Friend Annual

Her needles, casting off the stitches, suddenly stopped. The old lady at the window must have wondered where she had got to.

"No matter how miserable you've been, Kathleen Craig, you ought to have gone round and waved to her!"

She would put off no longer. Next evening she wrapped the finished bed-jacket in tissue paper and set off.

Mrs Ainslie was delighted to see her. "Forgive me for not coming up before," Kathleen apologised.

"My dear, I am only too pleased to see you now. I used to love watching you and your nice young man."

"That's all over now," Kathleen said quickly. "I brought this for you."

The jacket was unwrapped with exclamations of pleasure.

"I am so glad you came today," Mrs Ainslie said. "I thought I might never see you again, and there's something I want to tell you. Please don't think me interfering, but the last time I saw your friend was on a Saturday some weeks ago. At two o'clock he drove up to the pillar-box and waited half an hour. Then he walked up to where you live. When he came back he got into the car and drove off. He seemed in a very bad mood."

"Two o'clock?" she gasped. "Then he couldn't have got my message. But surely he would have still waited? I know what it was! He must have seen me with George."

She explained everything to Mrs Ainslie.

"If I had only gone on to church that Sunday, the whole thing might have been explained!"

Mrs Ainslie nodded.

"What can I do about Martin?" asked Kathleen. "I feel you know so much more than I do."

Mrs Ainslie was looking out the window, her face breaking into a smile.

"He's down there posting a letter. Go to him, my dear."

Kathleen rose immediately.

"I'll go! But I'll be back. We'll both be back," she said with assurance.

A NEW car stopped at the door of Holly House just as the church bells started to ring.

"She's at the window," Kathleen told Martin. "All dressed up, too. I don't think I ever saw anyone so happy!"

"You're wrong. Look at me!"

He took her hand, the one that wore her new engagement ring.

"You happy too?" he asked.

She nodded, unable to speak. Then they went into the house to help the old lady downstairs and into the car.

A few minutes later Janet Ainslie was sitting in a church pew again while soft organ music filled the air. With misty eyes she looked round at the stained glass windows, at the choir and at the grey-haired minister mounting the high pulpit.

Now the minister was standing above them, smiling down at his congregation. Janet Ainslie felt that his smile was especially for her.

"Let us worship God," he said. "Let us sing hymn number twenty-nine—'Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices.'"

Janet Ainslie opened her hymn book with a full heart.



Royal Scots Grey Memorial, Edinburgh

J. Campbell Kerr

IT HAPPENED ONCE TOO OFTEN!



by
Sheila
Scott

JEAN MacGREGOR waited in the hall for the doctor to come downstairs. For nearly three weeks her Aunt Alice had been ill, but now she was well on the way to recovery. So well on the way, in fact, that it was daily becoming more difficult to keep her in bed. Her impatience seemed to have centred on young Dr Aird.

It Happened Once Too Often!

"He's far too good at laying down the law," Aunt Alice complained.

"And you're not very good at obeying it," Jean smiled.

"These young doctors think they know everything," her aunt went on.

"Surely I know when I'm fit enough to get on my feet again?"

"Well, we'll see what he says today."

Certainly Dr Aird had been firm with Aunt Alice. His manner was as brisk and professional as ever when he arrived and went upstairs.

Jean could hear the murmur of voices but not what was being said. Then the bedroom door opened and Dr Aird called a rather gruff "Good-morning" to her aunt before coming downstairs.

"How is she, Doctor?" Jean asked as he reached the foot of the stairs.

"She's fine," he replied. "At least she will be if she has the sense to take things easy for a bit."

Laying his black bag on the hall-stand, he took out a pad of prescription blanks.

"Just a few more pills," he said. "And maybe a tonic later."

Dr Aird was tall, a head taller than Jean herself, but well set-up and with a brisk decisiveness about his movements. His dark suit was well pressed and his white shirt immaculate.

Looking at him as he scribbled down the prescription, Jean wondered what he was like as a person. Did he ever relax?

With a quick movement he tore off the prescription slip and handed it to her.

"I'll get it right away," she said.

As he buttoned on his coat, Jean went to open the door to see him out. He picked up his bag and then stopped, his dark, intent eyes on her face.

"I have to go back to the surgery now," he said. "Come along and I'll drop you off in the High Street if you want to collect those pills now."

"Thanks very much." Jean was surprised but not displeased by the offer.

"I'll just see if there's anything my aunt wants before I go."

He nodded. "I'll wait for you in the car."

Slipping on her coat and collecting her handbag, Jean dashed upstairs.

"How are you feeling now, Aunt Alice?" Jean asked.

"None the better for the doctor being here."

"But he says you're fine now!"

"I'm glad he realises it. It's been a hard job convincing him."

"If there's nothing else you want just now, I'll slip down town and get your prescription. I won't be long."

"Don't hurry back for me," Aunt Alice said. "And I'm sorry I sounded irritable. I was just feeling a bit sorry for myself. Away you go then."

DR AIRD was behind the wheel of his car when Jean came out of the gate. He leaned over and opened the door for her to get in beside him. As soon as she was settled in her seat he drove off.

"I'm afraid your aunt thinks I'm too good at laying down the law," he remarked.

This was so near the truth that Jean could think of nothing to say.

"It's for her own good," Dr Aird went on. "If she doesn't take things easy for a bit, she might well have a relapse."

The People's Friend Annual

"I'll do what I can to convince her," Jean assured him. "But it's difficult to sit back when you're used to doing so much."

"Everybody admires her for it," he said. "But when her health's at stake . . . However, I've told her she can get up for a short time tonight if she feels like it. Later in the week she can take a walk in the garden if the weather is reasonable. But she mustn't overdo it."

They had turned into one of the busier streets leading to the High Street. As they approached a set of traffic lights Dr Aird braked the car to a halt. He took his eyes off the road and turned to look at Jean.

"That applies to you too, Miss MacGregor."

"I—I don't understand."

"You've had a lot to do, nursing your aunt."

"Oh, I don't mind. I can manage well enough——"

He smiled. "I'm sure you can. I just thought you looked a bit pale, that's all. You won't have had much of a chance to get out and about those last few weeks. It'll be easier when your aunt's on her feet again."

The lights had changed to green again and Dr Aird turned his attention back to the road. Jean was conscious of the warmth of colour in her cheeks, but he said nothing more. A few moments later he drew in at the kerb in front of the big chemist's in the High Street.

"This do?" he asked.

"Thank you. Yes, this is fine."

"I'll be in to see your aunt again. Good-morning, Miss MacGregor."

"Good-morning, Doctor," Jean said and stepped out on to the pavement.

THE busy street was bright with April sunshine. There was a wind blowing too, strong enough to drive little flocks of fleecy clouds across the blue sky overhead. Jean handed in the prescription which the chemist said would be ready in about a quarter of an hour.

In spite of the freshness of spring in the air Jean felt vaguely depressed as she came out into the High Street again.

But there was nothing wrong with her.

It was true she had been kept busy nursing her aunt. It was true too she hadn't been out and about much those last few weeks. But in a way she was glad of it. She hadn't wanted to meet people. She had wanted time for the ache in her heart to wear off. Time to forget Ken Groves.

Even though she wasn't in love with him any more it was still painful to remember him.

Just because two people grew up together, it didn't mean they were meant for each other.

Looking back now, it seemed to Jean that she had always known what Kenny was really like. But until a month ago she had never been honest enough to admit it to herself.

As a child he had been cheerful and high-spirited and restless. Reckless too sometimes, so that he laughed at her for her caution.

Grown up, he was as restless as ever. Since leaving school he'd had a dozen jobs, none of which had satisfied his desire to have money in his pocket and the time in which to spend it.

Jean had done her best to make him see reason. At her insistence he had kept his last job for nearly two years.

It Happened Once Too Often!

STARING unseeing at her reflection in the plate-glass of an ironmonger's window, Jean recalled the occasion of their parting.

It was a wet afternoon. There had been few customers in her father's grocery shop and Jean was busy checking invoices at the far end of the counter. She did not notice someone had come into the shop.

"Shop."

Jean raised her head in surprise.

"Ken!" she exclaimed, coming along the counter towards him. "What are you doing here?"

He grinned happily, his reddish-fair hair beaded with raindrops.

"Just dropped in to tell you I've got a new job."

"But—but why?"

Ken shrugged. "Why not? The last one didn't suit me. I'm not the kind of person that can be happy tied to a chair in an office." He smiled. "Anyway, I've found a better one."

"What?"

"I'm going to sea. I've joined the Merchant Navy."

"And what about us?"

"Us?" He was still smiling, full of enthusiasm for his new job and the exciting life it seemed to promise. "I'm not going away for ever, you know. You'll be here when I come back, won't you?"

She raised her head and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Will it matter whether I'm here or not when you do come back?"

"I see," he said slowly. "I'm sorry, Jean. I seem to have taken a lot for granted."

He ran his hand through his unruly curls and the rather lost look she knew from his boyhood came back to his eyes.

"We're different people, you and I, Jean. If you hadn't been so loyal you might have realised it before. I'm not the one for you. That's what you think, isn't it?"

Slowly Jean nodded and he put his hand on her arm.

"Good-bye then, Jean," he said softly. "I'll write. You won't mind that, will you?"

"If you want to——"

But in her heart she knew he wouldn't.

THREE days later Jean and her mother were finishing breakfast when her father came in from the shop. He had a letter in his hand.

"This just came with the post," he said. "You'd better read it, Meg."

There was concern in his voice and his eyes were troubled. His wife took the letter.

"Something wrong?" she asked.

"It's about Alice," he replied. "She's ill."

Mrs MacGregor handed the letter to Jean.

"You read it, Jean," she said. "I haven't my glasses."

Jean read the letter aloud. It was from a neighbour of her father's sister telling of her sudden illness. The neighbour was doing her best to look after Aunt Alice, but with her own young family it was difficult.

"I'll have to go right away," Mrs MacGregor said when Jean finished. "There's a train about twelve. It gets in before four o'clock——"

The People's Friend Annual

"Wait, Mum," Jean broke in. "Can't I go? It would be a lot harder on you than on me."

"But it's not fair to ask you, Jean."

"Let her go if she wants to," Mr MacGregor interrupted. "She and her Aunt Alice get on fine, and—well, the change of company'll not do her any harm."

Jean saw the look her mother and father exchanged and knew what they were thinking.

"Well," her mother said a little doubtfully, "if you're sure you can manage——"

"I'll manage fine."

That was more than three weeks ago.

In a way it had helped. There had been a lot to do, nursing Aunt Alice and keeping the house going. Jean hadn't had much time to think of Ken Groves.

Suddenly Jean felt annoyed with herself for feeling depressed on this bright morning. It was time she took a hold of herself.

She moved away from the ironmonger's window. The next shop was a milliner's. It was gay with pastel-coloured ribbons and a small, carefully-chosen collection of Easter bonnets.

Jean's heart beat a little faster and her spirits rose. That was what she needed. A new hat for Easter. Something silly and perky and bright that would restore her faith in herself. She pushed open the shop door before she could have second thoughts on the matter.

It was nearly twenty minutes later when, with a twinge of conscience about the time she had spent, she came out. Her depression had gone and she had her Easter bonnet.

ABOUT eight o'clock on the following Friday night the minister called. It was not the first time he had called to ask about Aunt Alice.

Mr Prentice was a jovial man in his early sixties.

"And how's your aunt tonight?" he asked in his warm, friendly voice.

"Much better," Jean replied. "In fact she's convinced she's fully recovered. I've just managed to pack her off to bed. She's been up most of the day and was out in the garden for half an hour this afternoon. The sun was quite warm then."

Mr Prentice nodded.

"Yes, indeed. It's very heartening to feel the sun warm on your face again after a long spell indoors. But I hope you'll ask her to be careful. The weather can be treacherous at this time of the year."

"I do try," Jean answered. "The doctor has warned her well enough that she has to take things easy for a bit."

"I can see your point there. It'll be a sore trial for someone like Miss MacGregor to take things easy. However, I'm sure you'll manage. It's a blessing she has a niece like yourself to look after her."

"I'm glad to do what I can," Jean smiled. "We've tried to persuade her to come and stay with us in Edinburgh—but, well, I don't think she'll ever agree to leave here."

"Well, her roots are deep here," Mr Prentice explained. "And she's an independent kind of a body with so many interests. That reminds me of one of my reasons for calling tonight. It's about next Sunday."

"Next Sunday?"

It Happened Once Too Often!

Mr Prentice smiled. "Easter Sunday is a particularly important one for your aunt. Hasn't she told you?"

Jean shook her head.

"Some of our congregation call it Daffodil Sunday," Mr Prentice went on. "The idea was your aunt's. It began a few years ago when she was still in charge of the Girls' Guildry. Your aunt had suggested to me that the girls might be allowed to provide the flowers for the church on Easter Sunday. Daffodils, she thought. We always have plenty here at that time."

"What a good idea!" Jean said.

"I thought so too," Mr Prentice agreed. "What neither your aunt nor myself had foreseen, however, was the amount of daffodils the girls would bring. There seemed to be thousands of them. Your aunt was delighted and insisted on arranging them all herself. It took her hours, but she made a magnificent job of it."

"And she's been doing it ever since?" Jean asked.

"Every year," Mr Prentice told her. "The girls leave the daffodils in the church hall on Easter Saturday and your aunt arranges them in the church. It's a very important job for her. I think it's a kind of symbol of her service, and she's even a little jealous of her right to do it."

"I think I'm beginning to understand," Jean said slowly. "Aunt Alice has been desperately keen to be fit for tomorrow. It would break her heart if she didn't manage to arrange the flowers for you."

"I'm afraid she would take it rather hard," Mr Prentice frowned. "But would it be wise? Is she really fit enough?"

"I don't know," Jean replied doubtfully. "The doctor's coming in tomorrow. . . . So that's why Aunt Alice didn't mention Daffodil Sunday to me. She was afraid I might feel it was beyond her strength."

"I'm rather afraid it would be," Mr Prentice said seriously. He paused and seemed to come to a decision. "I think it would be foolish to allow her to take any risks," he said. "Would you tell her I'll make arrangements for the flowers to be done?"

"I'll tell her now," Jean assured him. "But she won't like it."

It was fully ten minutes before Jean came back into the sitting-room.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I couldn't persuade her to agree. She will insist she's perfectly fit. She says there's no need to ask anyone to help."

Mr Prentice looked worried. "But is it wise?" he asked.

"I did my best," Jean told him. "But Aunt Alice isn't very easily convinced sometimes. However, I did manage to get her to agree to leaving the last word to the doctor tomorrow. If—if he says she mustn't do it, perhaps I could do it for her."

"That's very kind of you, Miss MacGregor. It's a big job, you know."

"I don't mind. I think I would enjoy it. Besides, it's just possible Aunt Alice may agree to me doing it."

"Perhaps you are right," Mr Prentice got to his feet.

EASTER Saturday was cold and blustery with occasional heavy showers. Aunt Alice had insisted on getting up for breakfast. Though she didn't have a great deal to say, Jean could see she was keyed up with the thought that the church hall would already be bright with large bunches of daffodils. Jean hoped the doctor would call early.

The People's Friend Annual

In the morning her aunt busied herself with baking a large Easter cake. Jean left her to it while she tidied up the house. In spite of her hopes the doctor had not called by lunch-time. In fact it was just after two o'clock when the bell rang.

"That'll be him now," Aunt Alice said as Jean hurried to the front door.

Heavy spots of rain were dappling the front steps as Jean opened the door.

Dr Aird seemed cheerful as he asked Aunt Alice how she was feeling.

"Perfectly fit," she replied. "I've been waiting for you to call so that I could get away down to the church. There's a job there waiting for me."

Dr Aird shook his head.

"Not this afternoon, Miss MacGregor," he said firmly. "It'll just have to wait—or maybe Jean can do it for you."

"Nonsense!" Aunt Alice said sharply, her disappointment evident in her voice. "It's something I have to do myself. It's important."

"And your health's more important," Dr Aird broke in.

"But I'm perfectly all right now."

"Maybe you are. But you've been more ill than you thought. If the weather improves a bit and isn't too cold, you can go to church tomorrow for the Easter service."

"But that'll be too late——"

"Auntie, please!" Jean interrupted desperately. "Let me do it for you."

"I don't see why I can't do it myself——"

Dr Aird looked at Jean then back at her aunt.

"I'll tell you why," he said. "Apart from yourself, you're not being fair to Jean here."

"Why not?"

"Because she's had a lot to do nursing you back to health already. If you go down to church now you'll as likely as not get a chill. Then you'll be worse than ever, and she'll have to do it all again."

AUNT ALICE was on the point of objecting again, then her resistance seemed to crumble and she sank down in an armchair. Jean could see that Dr Aird had won, but her heart went out to her aunt in her disappointment.

"I'll do it, Auntie," she said gently, sitting on the arm of the chair and putting her arm round her aunt's shoulder. "I'll not do it nearly as well as you could, but I'll do my best."

Her aunt did not reply at once. Then she patted her niece's hand and looked up with a brave attempt at a smile.

"You'd better get away down then, Jean," she said. "There's a fair bit to do."

She looked at Dr Aird.

"I'm sorry if I haven't been a very good patient," she said with a smile.

"But maybe you were right after all. I suppose it was silly of me."

"I'd rather have you well than ill, you know," he smiled in answer.

Then he looked out of the window.

"There's a pretty heavy shower on just now," he told Jean. "If you're going down to the church, I'll drop you off there. It's on my way."

"The very thing," Aunt Alice answered before Jean had time to say anything. "The sooner she gets started the better."

It Happened Once Too Often!

"THANK goodness you were firm, Dr Aird," Jean said when they were in the car on the way to church. "I was dreading today in case Aunt Alice should insist."

"I hated to do it," he replied, "but it was for her own good. It's a good job you were there to do it for her."

"Maybe," Jean said ruefully. "But I'm scared. I know I won't do it nearly as well, and if I make a mess of it, Auntie'll be so upset tomorrow."

"Don't worry," he said. "You'll manage."

As it happened Jean did manage. Though not entirely on her own.

She had just finished taking the flowers from the hall into the church when she was joined by a cheerful, grey-haired lady in the late fifties. Jean recognised her as a member of the congregation whom she had seen in church the week before, but she didn't know her name.

"I heard you were on your own here," the lady said. "Maybe you wouldn't mind if I gave you a hand."

"I'd be delighted," Jean replied.

So they set to with a will. It was five-thirty when they finished, and Jean knew that on her own she could never have achieved the striking effect the flowers made.

"Well, I don't know about you," the lady said, "but I'm quite proud of that. And I think I can understand how your aunt felt."

She glanced at her watch.

"Good gracious!" she gasped. "Look at the time. Iain will be thinking he's not getting any tea. I could do with a cup myself. Will you come and join us, Miss MacGregor?"

"I'd love to," Jean said, "but maybe I'd better be getting back to see how Auntie's getting on."

"Oh, I don't suppose she'll mind for another half-hour," the lady said. Then a thought struck her. "I don't believe I introduced myself. I'm Mrs Aird. Iain told me you were doing this to help out and that's why I'm here."

"You mean Dr Aird told you?" Jean was surprised. "I thought it must have been Mr Prentice——"

"Anyway it's not important," Mrs Aird smiled. "Come and have a cup of tea. Iain can run you home before he goes out to the surgery."

JEAN'S heart was full when she came out of the church with her aunt the next morning. Bright April sunshine streaming through the tall stained glass windows had lit the massed daffodils to a glorious bank of colour. The full congregation, the many voices raised in the familiar Easter hymns and the simple, sincere address from Mr Prentice all made the service a moving experience for her.

Aunt Alice too, she knew, had been affected. This morning seemed to set a seal on her recovery. Now, as they left the church, everyone wanted to speak to her, to tell her how pleased they were to see her.

Jean was on the fringe of the little group when Mrs Aird spoke to her.

"I think the church looked very well, Jean," she said. "I still feel quite proud of our effort."

"So do I," Jean agreed.

They talked for a few moments, then Aunt Alice joined them.

"I haven't had a chance to thank you for helping Jean," she told Mrs

The People's Friend Annual

Aird. "But maybe you could come up for tea this afternoon. And your son too, if he likes. I feel a bit conscience-stricken about him because I didn't always want to do what he said."

"I'll be very pleased to come," Mrs Aird replied. "I can't say for Iain though. He has to go up to the hospital some time, but I'll ask him anyway."

However, Iain Aird was with his mother when she arrived that afternoon.

"I'm just on my way to the hospital," he told Jean's aunt. "But I'll be back later."

"Do you never get a day off?" Aunt Alice asked.

"Well, this isn't exactly work," Iain replied. "My mother always boils some eggs and paints faces on them for the children in hospital at Easter. I'm just delivering them."

"I see," Aunt Alice said thoughtfully. "Well, in that case, maybe there's something you could take them from me. There's an Easter cake I made yesterday."

"I'll be delighted to take it," Iain said. "Or better still, Jean can hand it over to Matron herself."

When they were in the car Iain Aird paused with his hand on the ignition key and looked at Jean.

"A marked improvement," he said solemnly.

Surprised Jean asked: "What? Me?"

He smiled. "Colour in your cheeks. A sparkle in your eye. A silly Easter bonnet perched on your head——"

Jean felt the colour deepen on her cheeks.

"I'm sorry if you don't like my hat."

"On the contrary," he replied. "It's just right. In fact it's just what the doctor ordered."

His eyes still had their dark, intent look, but there was a softness in them too. Her heart began to beat faster.

"Yes," he said again. "Just what the doctor ordered. . . ."

And he was looking, not at her hat, but into her eyes.



Shades of dusk begin to fall and another day is o'er.

WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS



GLENCOWRIE had its first heavy snow of the winter in the middle of March; a real skyful that covered the familiar landmarks of mountain and glen with a thick blanket of white.

To Moira Russell, looking from the front bedroom window of the Macleod cottage up the glen, the snow was the last straw. Cold and tired after a sleepless night, she packed her suitcase and thought about the coming farewell with Ralph Macleod. Her proposed marriage to the veterinary surgeon of Glencowrie now looked remote and unreal.

When she had told him last night that she could never make her home in Glencowrie he had taken it with the calmness that was so much a part of his nature.

The People's Friend Annual

She had met Ralph for the first time in the casualty ward of a big city hospital where he was awaiting an operation after a road accident. Then she had envied that calm courage which had enabled him to say : " I'm not afraid, nurse. I know I'm in good hands."

It was in that moment that Moira began to fall in love with him. During the weeks of recuperation that followed Ralph also fell in love with his nurse.

Before asking her to marry him, he told her all about his job as a veterinary surgeon, about his parents' home in Glencowrie, and the cottage half a mile away which he hoped to get for his own.

Twice during his stay in the hospital his parents came to visit him. On the second occasion he had introduced Moira to them as his future wife.

Moira could still feel the discomfort of the next few moments while two pairs of measuring eyes gazed at her. Then Mr Macleod spoke.

" You could have done worse, Ralph. I'm glad to know you, Miss Russell."

As they were leaving the hospital that day, Mr Macleod seemed to make up his mind about something.

" You'll come up to Glencowrie and visit us the first holiday you get, Nurse."

THE opportunity to go came early in March, and Moira excitedly boarded the train armed with magazines to while away the long journey from Glasgow to the West Highlands. It was over a month since Ralph had been discharged from hospital, and she could hardly wait to see him again.

Even the parting shot of Jim Wallace, one of the young doctors at the hospital, failed to mar her pleasure that day. But his words were to come back to her later with the full force of their meaning.

" Moira," he said, " do you really know what you are letting yourself in for if you go to live in a place like Glencowrie? Instead of the useful, busy life you have here in the city, you'll be nothing but a cook-housekeeper, always answering telephones and taking messages. You'll lose your identity, Moira. Besides, you won't know what to do with yourself in a quiet place like that."

Moira had laughed at the time, but long before the end of her first week in Glencowrie she was to remember Dr Wallace's words.

For the first two days Ralph's enthusiasm about his native glen had been so infectious that she couldn't help responding to it. She saw the bare trees and the grey March countryside through Ralph's eyes and not her own. His parents were still very reserved with her and said little, however.

On the day before Moira's holiday ended Ralph had been called out early to attend to an injured horse. He left word for her that he would make a round of calls while he was out.

As a result, Moira found herself facing the longest, loneliest and most tedious day of her life.

It was then that the words of Dr Wallace came back in full force. As she paced the small attic bedroom and listened to the slow, careful movements of Ralph's parents in the living-room below she began to think the doctor might have been right after all.

Feeling suddenly caged and frustrated, she put on her jacket and told Mrs Macleod she was going for a walk down to the village.

With The Best Intentions

The village was farther away than she thought, and by the time she reached it she was feeling cold and would have given anything for a cup of hot tea.

But Glencowrie did not have a hotel or even a tearoom, so she walked on, nodding to the few people she passed on the long main street. Her well-intentioned attempts at friendliness were doomed to failure from the start, however, and her nods were mostly received with cold stares.

Moira was longing to ask someone if there was any place in the village where cups of tea were sold. But by the time she had reached the far end of the main street she had forgotten that idea. Another less pleasant one had taken its place.

The girl who walked back through Glencowrie village and made her way up the glen road to the Macleod cottage looked a very different person to the one who had walked in the opposite direction an hour or two before. Her face was pale and her expression set.

THAT evening Moira drew Ralph away from the fireside on the pretext of wanting a walk before she went to bed. It was during that walk that she gave her ultimatum. At least, that's what it sounded like to Ralph.

"Ralph," she said suddenly. "Have you ever thought about being a veterinary surgeon somewhere else?"

Ralph laughed, a hearty booming laugh.

"Of course I haven't," he said. "Why should I when I'm needed among the people I know?"

"You would soon get to know people in other places. And I think you're a good enough vet to build a practice anywhere."

Ralph gazed at her in surprise and concern.

"What do you mean, Moira? What place had you in mind?"

Moira took a deep breath. She'd have to tell him how she felt.

"What about Glasgow?" she said. "I'm sure you'd do very well there."

"Yes, I might do well enough—after a time. But why, Moira? Why should I go to Glasgow when I'm quite happy here?"

Moira shrugged.

"Why indeed?" she said wearily. "If you're only considering yourself, please forget what I said. But I thought marriage had to be a partnership to succeed."

"Do—do you mean that you don't think you could be happy here?"

Moira could have laughed had she not felt so low in spirits. It had obviously never occurred to him that anyone could be unhappy in Glencowrie.

"I'm afraid that's just what I do mean! There's no place for me here."

"That's nonsense," protested Ralph. "As my wife, you must have a place here——"

"But as Moira Russell, no place! I'm afraid I couldn't settle for that."

Ralph began to look annoyed.

"Why not? Every wife's place is with her husband."

"You don't understand," protested Moira. "All my own married women friends lead busy and useful lives as well as being good wives to their husbands."

The People's Friend Annual

"Don't you love me well enough to make me your reason for living?" Ralph asked. "At least until there are children—if we have any."

Moira regarded him as a mother might regard a backward child.

"I love you too well for that, Ralph. The more a woman narrows her life the less able she is to make her love grow greater with the years. Can't you see that?"

Ralph looked more worried than ever.

"This has taken me completely by surprise, Moira. I never dreamed you wouldn't like Glencowrie. It—it just never occurred to me."

"It didn't occur to me either till I came here," Moira replied. "But I know now that I couldn't live in a place where I'm so—so unwanted by the people. They look at me as if I didn't exist."

At last, exhausted by argument and discussion, they had agreed to say no more about the matter until after Moira had returned to Glasgow. Then if she still felt the same way a month later, Ralph would consider moving from his beloved glen into the city.

IT was, in a way, a victory for Moira, but a singularly empty one. She went to bed that night feeling more miserable than ever.

And now she was packed and ready to leave Glencowrie.

She was looking from the window and trying to guess how deep the carpet of snow was when there was a knock on the bedroom door. Mrs Macleod came in with a cup of tea.

"I thought this might put some heat into you, lass," she said. "Ralph has had to go out to deal with an emergency at one of the hill farms. A ewe is having trouble in lambing. He's trying to get back in time for your train. But he said you had maybe better phone McWilliam for a taxi just in case he can't manage."

Moira's heart sank.

"I'll come down and phone right away," she said. "I hope this snow won't stop the taxi from coming."

"Don't worry about that. If it's possible to get here at all, Dan McWilliam will do it. His number is Glencowrie 43."

Moira lifted the telephone receiver and gave the exchange the number. In a few moments Dan McWilliam's gruff voice spoke in her ear.

"Good-morning, Mr McWilliam," she said. "My name is Miss Russell. I'm staying up the glen at the Macleod house. I wonder if you could come up here with a taxi? It's rather urgent——"

"That's all right, Miss Russell," Dan McWilliam broke in. "I've already had the message from Ralph Macleod. I'm just ready to make a start. I'll do my best to reach you."

Being a man of action and few words, he hung up then, and Moira went in to breakfast with mixed feelings. She was not sure whether she was glad or sorry that Ralph had telephoned for her taxi. It proved on the one hand that he was thinking of her, but on the other that he was determined to see that she caught that train for Glasgow.

Over breakfast his parents seemed more animated and talkative than usual, and she wondered uneasily if Ralph had been upbraiding them for their previous reserve. Or was it relief that she was going that had suddenly loosened their tongues?

With The Best Intentions

Mr Macleod talked about the glen and the village as if they were the whole wide world. Then he began to speak of his own youth.

"When I was a young man," he said, "I became very attached to a girl from Edinburgh. I almost asked her to marry me, but one day she mentioned that the man she married would have to make his living in the city."

"And you didn't care enough for her to do that?" suggested Moira.

"Maybe not," replied Mr Macleod. "But what really stopped me was the knowledge that in the city I would be like a fish out of water. You see, I'm a countryman born and bred."

Moira looked at him with questioning eyes, wondering just how much he knew about herself and Ralph.

"But surely that isn't the case with everyone born in the country, Mr Macleod? Thousands of born countrymen have made good in cities."

Mr Macleod nodded.

"I'll agree with you there," he said. "But in matters like this a man can only speak for himself, and maybe for the few who are close to him. I was lucky, for soon afterwards I met Elspeth here, and my problem was solved."

MOIRA shifted her gaze from Mr Macleod to the smiling face of his wife, who sat at the other end of the table.

Mrs Macleod coloured faintly as the girl looked at her. Suddenly Moira saw her as her husband must have seen her all those years ago. A bonny country lass with simple ways, content to devote her whole life and talents to making a home for the man she loved.

Moira felt slightly ashamed of her own more complex outlook on life. Her next remark was an attempt to justify her actions—not to her host and hostess—but to herself.

"Of course, the real truth of the matter was that you had been falling in love with Elspeth without really knowing it. Growing up in the same place and seeing each other every day perhaps, made it harder to realise what was happening until—well, you discovered the truth when you were getting over your affair with the Edinburgh girl."

To her amazement they both started to laugh. It was some time before they recovered enough composure for the conversation to proceed. Then it was Mrs Macleod who took up the tale.

"The only thing that's wrong with your theory is that I, too, happened to be an Edinburgh girl! But I was too much in love with my man to want to transplant him. Instead, I transplanted myself, and I don't think the change did me any harm."

Moira suddenly felt that behind the laughter and light-hearted banter there lay a criticism of her present attitude to Ralph. She was surprised she did not feel in the least angry about it. Perhaps she sensed that the deep love of these two people for their son was prompting them to be more outspoken than they normally were.

"Suppose Ralph had to make a choice between working here and working in a city, what do you think would be best for him?" she asked.

Slowly the old man filled his pipe, tamped it down, and lit it.

"That's a question only Ralph and the future can answer," he said, and then after a short pause, "with the help and understanding of the girl he loves, of course."

The People's Friend Annual

Moira considered this in silence. She knew the subject was now closed as far as her host and hostess were concerned. It concerned only herself and Ralph; a problem in living and loving that they alone could solve.

With an effort she forced herself to talk of more general topics, such as Highland depopulation. Ralph's father had more to say on that subject than Moira thought possible.

"What we need in the Highlands is young blood," he said. "Plans and schemes are all very well, but without brains and hands to give them shape they are just so much scrap paper. Every young man who leaves his native glen to take his ability and ambition into the cities is a loss to us like a wounded man losing his life's blood." Suddenly he stopped. "Forgive me, Moira. All this talk of our Highland problems must be boring to you."

Moira rose and walked over to the window.

"It isn't boring—it's rather frightening me," she said. "I think I'll run upstairs now and bring my case down. If Mr McWilliam manages through I wouldn't like to keep him waiting."

There was silence as Moira left the warmth of the living-room and went upstairs for her case. She had the feeling that Ralph's parents were willing her to make a decision she knew lay beyond her power to make. She must go to Glasgow, as far away as possible from this place and its people before she could make a decision about her future and that of Ralph. To try to do it here would be dangerous to their love and happiness.

That was why she stayed in her room until Dan McWilliam's ancient car shuddered its way through the last few yards of snow to come to a halt at the garden gate.

LIFTING her case, Moira hurried downstairs, said a hasty good-bye to Ralph's parents, and bundled into the car with her luggage.

Dan McWilliam nodded to her and put the car into gear. As the wheels, wrapped round with chains, got their grip on the packed snow, Moira looked out through the rear window and saw Mr and Mrs Macleod standing at the cottage door. They returned her wave and were lost to sight as the car laboured round a bend in the road.

Turning to face the front, Moira said: "Do you think you'll make it in time, Mr McWilliam?"

"It's in the hands o' Providence," he replied "But I'll do what I can."

Soothed in a way she could not understand by his simple philosophy, Moira closed her eyes. Despite the cold that nipped her toes and fingers, she must have dozed off.

She was awakened by the car taking a sudden lurch. Looking from the window, she could see no sign of the familiar landmarks she remembered.

Her first reaction was to tap Dan McWilliam on the shoulder and ask him if he was sure he was on the right road, but it seemed ridiculous to ask a man who knew every inch of this country such a question.

Lying back in her seat, she decided it was the snow that was making the passing scene so unfamiliar to her.

But her anxiety returned as the surrounding country grew less and less familiar.

"Mr McWilliam," she said, "are we going to be in time?"

"I hope so, Miss," he said. "It's hard going for the old bus, but I've never

known her give up yet, and we've been through a few hard winters together."

Moira looked at her wrist watch and gave a start.

"We've only got twenty minutes to get there," she said. "Are you sure you'll make it, Mr McWilliam?"

She did not understand why her question should startle the driver so much.

"Have you the gift of the second sight?" he asked in an awed voice.

Now it was Moira's turn to be startled.

"Of course not," she said. "What do you mean?"

"If you haven't got the second sight, how do you know that the birth will be in twenty minutes?" he demanded. "Are you just making a guess based on your nursing experience?"

"Mr McWilliam," said Moira stiffly, "I don't know what you are talking about. My train is due to leave Glencowrie for Glasgow in twenty minutes, and I must catch it."

"Train? What is all this about a train? Ralph Macleod said nothing about a train, Miss Russell. I was to collect you at his people's cottage and take you up to Ashgrove Farm. He said it was desperately urgent."

LIKE someone in a dream, Moira heard his words. Surely she would waken in a moment and be back in her own familiar world again! But this was no dream.

"That's ridiculous, Mr McWilliam! Why would I want to go to Ashgrove Farm? You've made a mistake!"

Those last words seemed to touch Dan McWilliam on the raw. He swivelled round and faced her, regardless of the fact that the car was still moving.

"I don't make mistakes, Miss Russell. Maybe they're also making a mistake at Ashgrove thinking that young Mrs Lamont is expecting a bairn, and that the old nurse is too frail to make the long journey through the snow from Ardowrie. Maybe it is also a mistake that Archie Lamont is pacing up and down like a demented creature wondering who is going to help bring the poor child into the world? Maybe——"

"Look out!" Moira exclaimed suddenly. "You're heading for a snow-drift!"

Dan McWilliam spun round in the nick of time, swung the car back on to its track, and muttered something under his breath. When he spoke again he didn't take his eyes off the road.

"Now," he said in frigid tones, "will you please tell me what I have to do? Have I to take you to that poor woman's bedside or not?"

In a weak voice, drained of all anger and rebellion, Moira said: "Just take me to where Ralph—Mr Macleod told you, Mr McWilliam. I'm sorry for the misunderstanding."

"That's all right, Nurse," said Dan McWilliam.

He drove in silence until they reached the farm. As the car drew up at the door of the farmhouse a man rushed from the doorway.

"Oh, come quickly, Nurse. I'll never forgive myself if anything happens to Mary. Please hurry!"

A change immediately came over Moira Russell. Gone at once was the worried girl, uncertain about her future. Instead there stepped from the car a cool, efficient nurse about to tackle a job she had so often done before.

Sweeping into the house, she just had time to notice Ralph's Land-Rover

The People's Friend Annual

standing by the corner of the building, and to wonder vaguely why he was here. But the nurse was in complete command now, and all such thoughts were driven from her mind by the call to action.

For the next hour and a half Archie Lamont continued his frenzied pacing to the accompaniment of Dan McWilliam's gruff voice.

"Stop worrying, man," he kept saying. "Your Mary will be all right."

That piece of advice had to be repeated many times before a small plaintive cry sounded as loud as bells pealing in the white silent world.

At the same moment Ralph Macleod appeared round the corner of the house holding something small and fluffy in his arms. But neither Archie Lamont nor Dan McWilliam noticed him.

A short time later the living-room door opened and Moira came in with a small bundle of warm humanity wrapped in a white woollen shawl.

"Congratulations, Mr Lamont. Here's your little son."

Archie Lamont was still standing wide-eyed in wonder when the door opened again and Ralph came in carrying a new-born lamb in his arms.

"The ewe's out of danger now, Archie," he said, "but you'll have to rear this lamb in the house. She's taken a scunner to him and won't let him near her or the others. You'll have to be a father to him, too, till he grows up."

At that moment his eyes met Moira's, and she knew their problem had melted away as though it had never been. Looking down at the new-born baby in her arms, then at the new-born lamb in Ralph's, Moira Russell learned the greatest lesson of her life—that in every quarter of the earth, no matter how remote and distant from the familiar faces and scenes, there is still a place and a home for the willing heart.

An hour later she got into Ralph's car and he drove her through the snow to the village in time to catch the next train to Glasgow.

AS they walked from the car to the station they passed a few people, and to Ralph's greeting they each and all answered: "Good-afternoon, Ralph," and then "Good-afternoon, Nurse."

"Good-afternoon, Nurse!" The words rang in Moira's ears like glad bells of welcome, and she turned impulsively to Ralph.

"I didn't think they knew I was a nurse," she said. "This is the first time any of them have ever called me that."

"They're cautious people," he said slowly. "I've no doubt they heard you were a nurse, but before they would call you that they waited for you to prove it. Incidentally, one of them was old Nurse Grierson, from Ardcowrie. The way she spoke to you gives me the idea that she's about ready to retire now, and is glad to see someone around who might be moved to take her place. But, of course, that's out of the question, Moira, isn't it?"

"Is it?" asked Moira. "I can't see why. I've got all the necessary qualifications, and——"

"But you forget, my dear. Your native glen is the city of Glasgow. That's what you told me last night."

Moira looked deep into his eyes and smiled.

"Since last night I have lived a hundred years, Ralph," she said. "Today my native glen is wherever you are and wherever anyone calls 'Nurse.' It took a new-born baby and a new-born lamb to open my eyes to the simplest of truths."

NO GUEST MORE WELCOME



by
Tain Lothian

THE demolition of Molendinar Mansions may be said to have ended a chapter in the social history of Glasgow. But it also began one in the married life of Molly and John Ferguson.

As she sat silently opposite John beside the fire in their new villa in Giffnock, Molly caught sight of the small paragraph in the evening paper.

She would have read it out to John but she was still cross with him after their heated argument about whether Molly should take a job or not. So she handed him the paper, pointing out the paragraph.

The People's Friend Annual

At first John merely glanced at the small news item. Then he suddenly realised what it was about.

The paragraph read:—"The last of the tenants of Molendinar Mansions, Mrs Emily Little, was today persuaded to leave the condemned building and to accept the Corporation's offer of accommodation in Laburnum House, an Eventide Home. It appears that Mrs Little's main reason for refusing to move when quittal notices were served some months ago, was because she expected her son to return home from America to visit her."

Forgetting their recent argument John Ferguson raised his eyes to meet those of his wife. To him she looked even lovelier now than she had been when he first fell in love with her.

"So that's the end of our old home," he said at last, swallowing a lump in his throat. "We had some happy times there, Molly."

Molly nodded, still too full of mixed emotions to speak. Both she and John had grown up in Molendinar Mansions.

But what had really brought them together was the fact that they had both lost their mothers when they were very young. They had only had their fathers to look after them, with occasional sympathetic help from the neighbours. Two worried fathers out at work had been glad to know that watchful eyes were being kept on their children during the long day. And no pair of eyes had been quicker or keener than those of Mrs Emily Little.

But as children, Molly and John didn't appreciate Mrs Little very much, especially when their self-appointed guardian combed their hair vigorously and insisted on washing inside and behind their ears almost every time she saw them.

But there had been compensations for these indignities, such as the thick slices of bread and strawberry jam which were produced each time.

JOHN smiled now.

"Do you remember those jammy pieces?" he said. "Jam on both sides and doubled up."

Molly smiled back, her lips trembling a little.

"We must have cost her a great deal," she said. "Because we always seemed to be hungry in those days."

"Yes," John chuckled softly, "But she never once refused us."

"Even if she did give us a lecture every time she saw us!" said Molly. "And the number of times we had to hear about that wonderful son of hers who could never do anything wrong!"

John Ferguson looked into the fire, remembering.

"Yes, it was always 'my son Johnny,'" he said. "He must have been the finest person who ever lived. I spent half my childhood hating him and half trying to grow up as like him as possible."

Molly blushed suddenly at another memory.

"Sometimes when I was very small I used to wish he would come back from his travels. I imagined him arriving suddenly, riding up the street on a big chestnut horse, dressed in armour like a knight. I told myself that if he did come I'd be his princess, marry him, and live happily ever after."

John pretended to scowl at her.

"Oh, did you! And what was to happen to me?"

"There's no need to be jealous, darling," Molly protested. "It was before I really knew you. And sometimes I think that trying to live up to Mrs Little's son, Johnny, helped me when I married you."

"It's strange you should say that," remarked her husband. "It was trying to live up to Johnny that made me try to better myself. It kept me at night-school when I wanted to play football. The absent Johnny was so good at everything that I simply had to do as well."

Molly gazed at him lovingly.

"I think you did much better, darling. Johnny may have been everything Mrs Little said, but he never once visited his mother."

"But he was in America. That's a long way to come," said John reasonably.

Molly gave an unladylike sniff.

"Sometimes I think Mrs Little made that up to excuse him," she said. "He was probably living a lot nearer Molendinar Mansions than America."

"If I thought that I'd be very angry," replied John. "To think of that poor old woman waiting all these years, praising him and holding him up as an example to other people."

Molly looked thoughtful.

"John," she said suddenly. "Do you think it might help if we advertised for him?"

John thought about it, then shook his head.

"Mrs Little might not like that," he said. "She always liked to keep her business to herself. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, but he could at least provide a home for her."

"The trouble is, it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack, trying to find him," John said sensibly.

Molly sighed.

"I suppose you're right. But I feel so sorry for her."

There did not seem to be anything they could do about it. But Molly made a note of the Home to which the old lady had been taken, so that they could visit her. The matter might have ended there if a most unexpected letter had not arrived next day.

JOHN was busy making an early-morning cup of tea to take up to his wife when the letter-box rattled and a small, rather crumpled envelope fell through on to the mat. It was addressed in a shaky scrawl to Mr and Mrs Ferguson. Even before he opened it John knew instinctively who had sent it.

He was right. The letter was from Mrs Little, and like her speeches, it was brief and to the point.

"Dear John and Molly," it said. "As you will see by my new address I've had to leave Molendinar Mansions at last. Would you please take care of my furniture as my son is too far away to look after things for me? I hope you are both well and happy. Yours truly, Emily Little."

When John took up Molly's cup of tea he took the letter as well. His wife read it through slowly, a doubtful look on her face.

John guessed she was thinking of Mrs Little's shabby furniture in their lovely new home.

The People's Friend Annual

"Cheer up, darling," he said gently. "It can go in the loft, you know. Most of it, anyway."

Molly nodded and felt suddenly ashamed as she thought of the old lady who had been so good to them.

"I think we should go round to Molendinar Mansions after breakfast, John," she said firmly.

As soon as breakfast was over they set out for their old home.

Dismantling had already begun on the roof of the old building. Leaving Molly outside, John went to look for the foreman of the demolition squad to get permission to go into the house.

There was an unfriendly expression in the foreman's eyes as he looked at John, however.

"Are you Mrs Little's son?" he asked gruffly.

John explained quickly that he and Molly had been neighbours of Mrs Little's, and that she had asked them to look after her furniture. He produced the letter from Mrs Little, but the foreman merely glanced at it.

"All right," he said in a warmer tone. "I'll come and let you in."

As Molly followed John and the foreman into the once familiar close and up the first flight of stairs to Mrs Little's door, she thought how different everything looked now.

But when they went into the small, single-end house that held so many childhood memories Molly had a lump in her throat.

In a corner by the fireside an old rocking-chair still stood, looking lonely now that no one sat in it any more. It had played a large part in their childish games, and Molly's expression was gentle as she remembered the times when, sitting on Mrs Little's lap, she had been comforted by the slow motion of the old chair.

Little wonder that for a moment the young couple were lost in memories.

They were brought back to earth by the foreman, who wanted to get the building cleared completely as soon as possible.

"I could lend you a truck and a driver for an hour or so, to get it all out of the way, if you haven't too far to go," he said.

Gratefully John told him their address. The foreman went away, returning in a few minutes with the news that the truck was at the close, and two men were on their way up to move the furniture out.

The house was emptied of its contents in a very short time and became just a room, without personality or memories. The Fergusons were silent as they followed the last of the furniture downstairs, overwhelmed by the thought that soon Molendinar Mansions would just be a name in the past.

MOST Saturday afternoons John Ferguson was to be found at the local football ground. But today he was busy storing Mrs Little's furniture in the loft.

It was tiring work because each separate article had to be hoisted up through the trap-door. But at last everything was up except the rocking-chair. Looking down at it John shook his head.

"I'm sorry, darling," he said. "But there isn't nearly enough room left up here to get that in."

Molly sighed.

"Then we'll just have to make space for it in one of the rooms," she replied, shrugging her shoulders. "Where shall we put it, John?"

John climbed down from the loft.

"Let's have it in the living-room," he decided. "It's a long time since I fell asleep in a rocking-chair."

Together they re-arranged the living-room so that the rocking-chair would fit in.

"It looks awfully shabby," said Molly, dissatisfied. "But it'll have to stay there until we can think of something else."

Too tired to speak, John merely nodded and sat down on the chair. It began to rock gently, and soon he closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Smiling tenderly, Molly began to make the tea. As she did so her mind returned to the argument they'd had the night before. Somehow it seemed quite unimportant now.

Looking back over the day, Molly suddenly discovered she was happy—happier than she had been for a long time. She wondered at herself, for there was nothing to make her happy in what had happened that day.

After tea, John, refreshed by his short nap, washed the woodwork of the rocking-chair and gave it a coat of varnish. When it was finished the old chair shone like new, and looked a little less out of place in its modern surroundings.

"We could visit Mrs Little tomorrow and put her mind at rest about her furniture," Molly said just before they went to bed. "I know she'll be worrying about it."

"That's a good idea," agreed John as he yawned sleepily.

AMONG the chattering, gossiping old ladies in Laburnum House, Mrs Little alone was silent. She felt restless and irritable.

She was going through what the Matron called the "settling in" period. Newcomers were always restless at first, but after a few days they became quite at home.

But Mrs Little had never given in to her advancing years, and she couldn't imagine herself settling down in the Home.

When she spoke to Matron about it, that lady smiled and assured her she would find the Home quite a pleasant place.

"Why don't you try to make the best of us, Mrs Little?" she advised. "Now that you have no home of your own, what else is there you can do?"

The old lady had been annoyed.

"I could always go and live with my son, for one thing," she snapped. Matron was puzzled.

"Your son?" she said. "There's no mention of any son in your papers."

"That doesn't mean I haven't got one," the old lady replied sharply.

"He'll take me away to a real house again when I send for him."

Busy though she was, Matron sat down and looked at Mrs Little with interest. There was something here she didn't understand.

"Tell me more about this son of yours," she said.

Silent no longer, Mrs Little spoke proudly of her brilliant son.

Matron listened patiently to the long, enthusiastic recital of the absent son's virtues, his ability and the high position he held in the esteem of his fellow men. And as she listened, she remembered other cases when

The People's Friend Annual

old ladies invented wonderful sons to compensate for their empty lives.

So she was surprised when Mrs Little produced a picture of a wedding group from her handbag. It said "Love from John and Molly" across one corner, with the words "To Mother" in smaller writing underneath.

MATRON was even more surprised when the next Sunday visiting hour found the young couple of the photograph standing in the hall of Laburnum House. They looked round them for a moment, then the young woman caught sight of Mrs Little.

"There she is, John! Come on. We'll give her a surprise."

Next moment the two young people were hugging Mrs Little and making much of her.

They assured her that her furniture was safely stored and that her beloved rocking-chair was being well looked after.

Halfway through the visit John went to look for Matron.

"Excuse me, Matron, where does Mrs Little sleep?" he asked. "I'd like to leave a little surprise on her bed for her."

More puzzled than ever, Matron led him to the dormitory the old lady shared with five others, and pointed out her bed and locker.

As he placed the small parcel on the bed, John caught sight of the wedding photograph on the locker where Mrs Little had left it for once.

"How nice of the old lady to keep our wedding photograph beside her," he said, picking it up.

Then his eye fell on the inscription across the corner of the picture. "To Mother," he read in a dazed tone of voice.

Matron was on her way to the door.

"With love," she said sharply. "Some people never realise that love can be expressed in more practical ways than by words on paper."

It was a very thoughtful John who rejoined Molly ten minutes later. As he and Molly walked down the drive he told her about the photograph.

"Yes, Mrs Little has just told me all about it," she said. "She never did have a son, John. She wasn't even married though she called herself a widow. She said it gave her more position. The son was just an invention of hers to make life feel less empty."

The tears spilled over as Molly went on in a trembling voice. "Oh, John, when I think of all the things she did for us when we were young, and then realise she has nothing to remember but a rocking-chair, I can't bear it. We must do something about her."

John put his arm round her comfortingly.

"We will!" he cried. "We'll go right now to see Matron."

A moment later Matron was listening to the most unusual request she'd ever heard. A young man and woman stood in her office asking if it was possible for them to adopt Mrs Little as their mother!

When the situation was made clear, Matron was so enthusiastic about the idea that the following Sunday evening saw the old rocking-chair in the living-room of the Fergusons' modern villa. It was rocking happily once more under the slight weight of silver-haired Mrs Little.

With the motion of the chair and the heat from the fire the old lady soon fell asleep, and there was a smile on her lips that told of happy dreams.

John and Molly smiled too, for they knew they were in that dream.

JUST A *Stick-in-the-Mud!*



by
Margaret
Nicol

IN the Crawford family it was taken for granted that Joyce, the elder daughter, knew everything. Her decisions were always accepted as the right ones.

Hadn't she passed all her exams for her M.A. before she was twenty-one? Now, as a secondary school teacher, her word was law, not only to her pupils, but in a large degree to her parents and her younger sister.

It must be admitted Kitty was rather a scatter-brain and her school career was nothing to be proud of.

On leaving school, Kitty became an apprentice hairdresser at Fairweather's. She enjoyed the job, and soon many customers asked for her

The People's Friend Annual

regularly. But folk didn't have the same respect for her as they had for Joyce. Kitty knew this and sometimes it depressed her.

"Do you think I'll ever be as good as Joyce at anything?" Kitty asked Great-Uncle Angus when he came to visit them from his home in Aberdeen.

Kitty was a favourite of the old man's. Somehow there was no one else she could confide in.

He paused before answering, his eyes resting affectionately on the pretty face, just now a little wistful.

"Brains aren't everything, my dear," he said consolingly. "And if you're happy, you have more than many people. You are happy, aren't you?" he asked, suddenly anxious.

Kitty's face cleared, and she laughed.

"Oh yes, I love my job and my friends. I'm more than happy."

Her uncle was relieved.

"Then don't worry about being as clever as Joyce, for you can't have everything. Besides, although Joyce has brains, she's not nearly so warm-hearted as you are."

Kitty rushed to her sister's defence.

"She is really, Uncle Angus. She just doesn't show it so much."

"She ought to," replied her uncle. "If she hides it too much it will disappear. It happens all too often. She should marry before it's too late."

It was an idea that was new to Kitty.

"Oh, I don't think Joyce will get married yet," she said, then added pensively, "There's Douglas Barr, of course. I wonder——"

WHILE this conversation was going on in the Crawfords' home at Langside, Joyce was attending a symphony concert in the St Andrew's Halls. At her side sat Douglas Barr. He was an accountant in the bank near her school.

Quite by chance Joyce had discovered he was fond of music. From that day their friendship had grown.

Tonight the brightness of their eyes as their glances met at the end of a Mozart symphony was due to more than their appreciation of the music.

At the interval they went into the corridor. People were gathering in groups to discuss the concert. In a quiet corner Douglas took the opportunity to say what was in his mind.

"It was a wonderful symphony, Joyce. But without you beside me, it would have meant nothing." He looked down at her, and she began to blush. "Could you—do you feel the same about me, Joyce?" he stammered.

Joyce's level head swam a little as she realised all he meant by those few words.

"Yes, Douglas, it made all the difference having you by my side."

Douglas took her hand in his. "We'll go and choose a ring tomorrow and announce our engagement, darling," he said tenderly.

But Joyce wasn't sure if they ought to.

"We couldn't get married for ages," she pointed out. "I believe a young couple should have plenty of money behind them, enough to buy a house and provide for a family. Security is everything in marriage."

"Everything?" he asked gently. "What about love?"

"It's important, too. But there's more than that to marriage."

Just a Stick-in-the-Mud!

Douglas said he didn't believe it but he would accept her decision. Like her family, he was sure such a wonderful girl must know best. So they decided to wait for three months and then get engaged.

Joyce didn't mention it to her family. The first they knew was when she came in with Douglas about three months later and showed them her ring. They were surprised and delighted. Kitty was especially thrilled.

"Oh, Joyce, I'm so happy for you!" she said, throwing her arms round Joyce.

"Hey, not so tight!" Laughingly Joyce disengaged herself from her sister's hug. "I'm glad you're pleased, Kitty. I only hope I'm doing the right thing."

"Of course it's the right thing!" said Kitty. "I think it's wonderful. When's the wedding? I'm dying to be your bridesmaid!"

"Not for years," Joyce said firmly, giving her reasons.

Kitty was disappointed.

"I suppose you know best," she said. "But if it was me, I'd get married at the earliest possible moment!"

HER words turned out to be prophetic. About a week later Kitty met Jack Daly. One of the other hairdressers, May Carson, asked if any of her friends would take pity on an engineering student who was in the same digs as her fiancé.

"Jack doesn't know anybody and he's very shy. Harry's got tickets for a dance tomorrow night." She looked round, and saw Kitty's sympathetic face. "Kitty, you'll come, I know."

The thought of the lonely young man was too much for Kitty.

"All right," she said resignedly, remembering another shy boy she had once gone out with. He had been very poor company.

But it was a surprisingly pleasant evening. Jack Daly turned out to be not only good-looking but an expert dancer. In Kitty's company he soon lost his shyness, and they danced together all evening.

"I suppose you two will be setting off home on your own?" May Carson said archly at the end of the dance.

Jack looked at Kitty and smiled.

"Of course," he said. They came out of the hall to get a late night tram. Heavy rain was lashing the pavement.

"You can't walk through this," said Jack. "We'll take a taxi!" He hailed one and they got in. Kitty gave the driver her address.

"Langside?" echoed Jack. "I—I didn't know."

Kitty wondered what was wrong and understood when the taxi stopped outside the house. Jack emptied his pockets and was still a shilling short for the fare.

"Wait a minute and I'll get some money," said Kitty.

She went into the house and met her father in the hall.

"Lend me some money, please, Dad," she asked.

He produced a handful of silver and Kitty went back to the taxi.

"What—what must you think of me?" Jack stammered. "Where can I meet you to pay you back, Kitty?"

"Tomorrow, six o'clock at Fairweather's," she replied. "But not to pay me back!" Then, with a wave and a smile, she went indoors.

The People's Friend Annual

"What sort of escort was that, too poor to pay your taxi?" her father grinned.

"He's a student and I think I've fallen in love with him," was Kitty's candid reply.

Mr Crawford looked perturbed. Kitty was so impulsive. "Think again, Kitty. You'd be doing a very unwise thing," he cautioned her.

But caution and Kitty didn't go together, and soon she and Jack were spending all their spare time in each other's company. And they were in love for all the world to see.

The evening Kitty brought Jack home to meet the family he was too nervous to make a good impression. The sight of Joyce, of whom he had heard such glowing reports, made him tongue-tied.

"Frankly, I don't know what you see in him, Kitty!" Joyce remarked after he had left.

Her sister was hurt.

"How could you, when you're not in love with him?"

"You'll soon get over it, dear. It can't be the real thing already," said Joyce patronisingly.

"But it is!" Kitty declared. "He's in love with me, too. What's more, we're going to get married as soon as he's qualified."

"You can't do that, Kitty. You'll have to wait till you have some money behind you. Take it from me, you're asking for trouble," Joyce said quickly.

"That's where you're wrong," Kitty replied with complete assurance. "I'm going to keep on my job and we'll share expenses and save. We'll get a small service flat and share the household chores, too. We're going to be happy while we're young."

"And what if a baby were to come along?" Joyce asked.

There was a little pause, then Kitty said slowly. "It would be the one thing needed to complete our happiness."

"Poor Kitty, how little you know!" her wise sister murmured pityingly.

A FEW months later Jack Daly was through and had got a job with good prospects if little else. Joyce and her parents were still against the marriage, but Kitty's love overcame all obstacles. A quiet wedding was arranged.

Uncle Angus came down from Aberdeen the night before, and Kitty threw herself into his arms.

"How I've missed you, Uncle Angus. You do think Jack and I are doing the right thing, don't you?"

The old man looked at her parents, and at Joyce and her fiance.

"You are doing the right thing for you, Kitty. It might not be right for everyone, but we can trust you always to keep love in the foreground," he said smiling.

His words made them thoughtful. Mr Crawford looked across at his wife and smiled. Douglas glanced at Joyce with a question in his eyes.

"Do you know, I admire Kitty's spirit," he said to her later. "I believe they will make a go of it. Couldn't we——?"

Joyce's mouth tightened.

"Now, Douglas, don't let yourself get carried away by my foolish little sister. She'll soon know how rash she has been!"

Just a Stick-in-the-Mud!

Joyce firmly believed that Kitty's marriage would end in disaster. Apart from having little money, they were so young. What did Kitty know about running a house? As for Jack, he knew even less, being the only son in a family of girls.

But Jack and Kitty had a mind to learn and an endless supply of love and good humour to help them over the rough places.

Though their flat was small and the furniture made Joyce shudder, the newly-weds didn't seem to notice it. They were too taken up with each other. Their housekeeping was a huge joke and their mistakes gave rise to peals of laughter.

There was the joke about the Sunday joint, for instance.

Usually they went to Langside for Sunday lunch, but one week Kitty invited the family to the flat. As she was putting the joint in the oven she began to have doubts about it. It had such a peculiar smell.

"Perhaps cooking will improve it," she thought.

Cooking, however, had the opposite effect, and it was a very harassed Kitty who greeted her guests.

"I'm sorry," she apologised. "I'm afraid the meat has gone bad. But there's soup and we could have eggs."

Douglas came to the rescue.

"Lead me to them, Kitty! I'm good at making omelettes."

Thanks to Douglas the lunch was a success. But Joyce didn't look too pleased.

"You'll have to make your butcher give you another joint, Kitty," she advised. "Don't let him off with it!"

"Leave it to me," Jack said loftily. "I'll take it back myself."

The following morning he wrapped the joint in a clumsy parcel and on his way to work marched into the shop with it.

"Good-morning!" said Mr Grant good-humouredly. "What can I do for you today?"

Jack pushed the parcel at him. "My wife bought this on Saturday. Just smell it!"

Mr Grant did so. "Did I serve your wife?" he asked.

"Either you or your assistant," said Jack. "My wife's family came for lunch and you can imagine how we felt!"

Mr Grant was apologetic, and gave him another joint which he assured him was the best in the shop.

Jack took it home in triumph and Kitty gave him a grateful kiss.

"How clever of you, Jack! Was he quite willing to change it?"

"Well, I had to be firm," said Jack. "We can't let them think that because we're young we know nothing. Perhaps you should change your butcher, Kitty."

"But I've done that already." A sudden thought struck her. "Which butcher did you go to, Jack?"

"Grant's, of course."

"Oh, Jack, you didn't!" Kitty laid her head on her arms in a helpless fit of laughter. "I got that joint in Ritchie's. Didn't I tell you? Poor Mr Grant!"

Next Sunday at Langside Kitty related the tale to the family. They were all amused except Joyce.

The People's Friend Annual

"I hope you paid Mr Grant for the joint?" she said.

"Of course I did, and we had a good laugh about it. We're the best of friends now. I've gone back to him again."

"It doesn't do to chop and change," rebuked her sister.

FOR the first time Kitty wondered if Joyce really knew so much. There were so many things one couldn't learn from books! Life was the only thing that could teach you, and life was about to teach Kitty even more.

She had a thrilling secret to tell her family. Her mother was delighted when she knew, but Joyce saw it in a different light.

"What about your job?" was her first question.

"I'll give it up with pleasure in the circumstances," replied Kitty.

"You'll always be hard up, and you can't have a baby in these rooms!" Joyce asserted.

But Kitty and Jack had their plans made. They'd saved enough to put down a payment for a small bungalow.

"We'll have to furnish it with soap boxes at first," she chuckled. "But we'll get by!"

Joyce was unusually quiet when out with Douglas that evening.

"What's the matter, darling?" he asked.

"I'm worried about Kitty."

"If there's one person you needn't worry about, it's Kitty!" Douglas smiled.

"But you haven't heard the news. She's going to have a baby."

"Splendid!" he exclaimed. "Kitty will be a fine mother and Jack will be so proud!"

"But they're not ready to have a family. The baby won't get a chance. And take it from me, there will be more to follow," said Joyce.

"Of course there will, and that's how it should be," said Douglas. "As for not getting a chance, what better chance could a child have than being born into a loving home?"

Joyce sighed.

"You're as bad as Jack and Kitty. Someone has to be practical and face facts!"

He pressed her hand lovingly.

"Joyce, couldn't you forget all that and just be the girl I fell in love with?"

"I don't know what you mean. I haven't changed," Joyce replied after a pause.

"Yes, you have," said Douglas. "You're getting more practical and less romantic each day. Let's get married soon. Next month?"

For a moment his urgency seemed to have an effect.

"Next month?" She laughed shakily. "But that's impossible. You don't realise all that a wedding involves."

"Why not a quiet wedding with just a few guests?"

"It wouldn't be fair to Mum. She's got big plans for our wedding when it comes."

"When it comes," repeated Douglas. "All right, Joyce, we'll wait. You can tell me when you're ready. I won't mention it again."

But though she hardly noticed it, the clasp of his arm had slackened. The eagerness in his face faded and died.

KITTY'S baby was a boy. They called him Angus, and Great-Uncle Angus came to the christening to hold his godson in his arms. He was a happy child and always seemed to be laughing.

For all that, they had their bad times with him.

It was a great responsibility and their hearts were often in their mouths for fear of doing something wrong. Kitty learned quickly, but there were times when the household became disorganised.

It always seemed to be on these occasions that Joyce arrived to find her in a muddle. Though she helped to put things to rights, "I told you so" was always written on her face.

Joyce was becoming more reserved and more authoritative in her manner. Kitty even fancied that Douglas was falling out of love with her and longed to warn her sister. But she knew Joyce wouldn't listen.

One evening, leaving Jack with the sleeping baby, Kitty went out to visit a friend. On the way back she met Douglas.

"Hello," said Kitty. "All alone? I thought you went out with Joyce on Fridays."

"I thought I'd be working late and called it off," said Douglas evasively.

"Well, if you've nothing to do, would you like to come along to our bungalow? You haven't seen it yet."

"I'd love to," Douglas said eagerly.

When they arrived the baby was very much awake and yelling lustily.

"Oh dear, what a welcome!" said Kitty. "But never mind, Douglas. Sit down and make yourself at home."

But Douglas did more than that. He took the crying baby in his arms, while Kitty and Jack looked on anxiously. Their visitor's big, strong hands held Angus firmly and comfortingly. He looked down into the small, screwed-up face.

"There, there, now!" he whispered in a soothing voice.

Almost miraculously the wailing ceased and Angus smiled up at him. The young parents looked at each other in amazement.

It wasn't long before the baby was back in bed. Then the three of them sat by the fire having coffee and a cosy chat.

"This is a real home," Douglas said.

"It's not much, really, but we're very happy," Kitty glowed.

"I know. One can sense it coming in the door," said Douglas.

DO you know what?" Kitty told Joyce on Sunday at Langside. "That man of yours is wonderful with babies. One word from him worked magic with Angus!"

"When was this?" asked Joyce in surprise.

"On Friday."

"But he told me he was working late."

"Well, he wasn't. I met him and took him home. He enjoyed it."

"I see," was all Joyce said. But later, when Kitty had gone and she had the house to herself, she answered Douglas's ring at the door with a set face.

The People's Friend Annual

"So you've come," she said coolly in the hall. "You're sure you wouldn't rather have gone to Kitty's?"

It was a revealing little speech. Douglas studied her face and his heart failed him. Her glance held no love, only reproach.

"I would have come here on Friday when I found I wasn't working late," he replied. "But you don't welcome me as you once did. Kitty and Jack made me feel at home."

He tried to take her hands, but she drew back.

"If you don't love me any more, Douglas, please say so!"

"I did love you——" he protested wearily.

"But you don't any more. It's quite all right, Douglas. I'm beginning to feel that way myself."

"In that case I'd better go," he said, turning to the door.

White-faced, Joyce pulled off her ring and held it out to him.

"No," he said. "I don't want it. I want nothing to remind me. This is good-bye, Joyce."

KITTY was putting the baby into his pram in the garden for his afternoon nap when she saw a familiar figure coming up the path.

"Uncle Angus! When did you come?" She kissed him warmly.

"What do you think of your godson now?" she asked, pulling back the pram cover for a moment.

"He's getting big," Uncle Angus said proudly. "Got my colour of eyes, hasn't he? I arrived at Langside this forenoon, Kitty, but I had to see you and this young man."

He took her arm into the house and Kitty made a cup of tea.

"Your mother gave me the news about Joyce and Douglas," he told her while they drank the tea. "It seems a pity!"

"Yes," said Kitty. "Yet I'm sure they were meant for each other."

"You think Joyce is sorry?" asked her uncle.

"I'm sure she is! She's tense and on the point of tears all the time. But she won't give in, Uncle Angus. Even if Douglas wanted to see her again, she would refuse to meet him."

"Yes, that's like Joyce. But if she were to meet him unexpectedly?"

He looked at Kitty and she nodded her dark head.

"It might be worth trying, Uncle Angus!"

Joyce had promised to baby-sit for Kitty and Jack the following night, as they had been invited to a neighbour's for the evening.

At seven o'clock she arrived at the bungalow to find the young couple ready to leave.

"Will you be all right?" Kitty asked.

"Of course. Everything's lovely. As long as Angus doesn't raise the roof!"

"He'll sleep, he always does. But if not, we're just two doors along. Thanks for coming, Joyce. Ready Jack?" She took his arm and they gave each other a long, loving look that stabbed at Joyce's heart.

As the door closed behind them Joyce took the armchair by the fire and let her eyes dwell on the modest furnishings.

Kitty and Jack would never cut a dash. They would probably always be in some kind of pickle.

Yet their marriage hadn't ended in disaster. Far from it. It was getting

Man's Best Friend



is a
Pound
of his
Own

Make a good Resolution—
Open a Savings Account with
SCOTLAND'S FIRST BANK

**BANK OF
SCOTLAND**

Wherever you may be in Scotland you
will find a branch nearby to welcome you

The People's Friend Annual

happier every day, and would go on like that. She had been wrong about them, wrong about many things.

Because of her folly she must go through life unloved. And Douglas? He would find someone else. Someone willing to take the risks she wouldn't take, who would put a bigger value on love than on so-called "security."

A wail came through from the bedroom, startling her. Joyce waited, hoping the cries would stop, but they only grew louder.



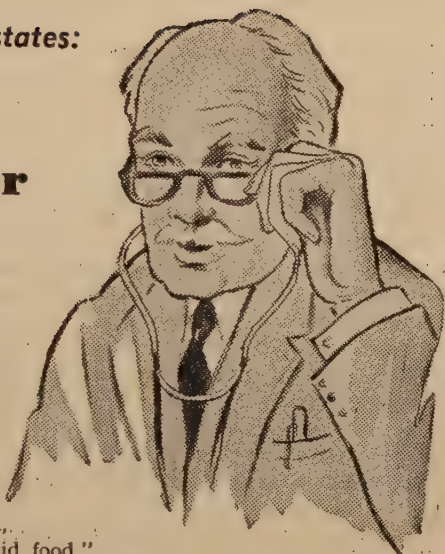
Oh dear, thought Joyce, what ought I to do? To go and fetch Kitty would be admitting defeat and Joyce was not one to do that easily. She lifted the baby and took him into the living-room.

First she sat with him on her lap, but that didn't help. Then she walked up and down with him. She was exhausted and as near panic as she had ever been when the doorbell rang.

Throwing a shawl round the baby, she went to the door and was astonished to see Douglas step into the hall. He looked taken aback, too.

A Leading Family Doctor states:

**"I find my
patients prefer
Dextora to
other glucose
beverages . . ."**



A leading Family Doctor states
"My patients prefer DEXTORA,
because it is more palatable and
can be enjoyed by young and old,
even when there is no desire for solid food."

And that, we find, is the general opinion among all
who have tried DEXTORA. The Orange flavour—quite
unique in a Glucose drink—makes
it extra specially palatable and
thoroughly pleasing to the most
delicate digestion.

Containing full Glucose content,
DEXTORA is confidently recom-
mended for building up lost
strength and restoring that
vital energy so essential to
good health.

2/6
PER LARGE BOTTLE

6d per SMALL BOTTLE

★ 3d Deposit on all bottles ★



IT DOES GOOD—IT IS GOOD

DEXTORA

**THE BETTER GLUCOSE DRINK
—ITS ORANGE FLAVOURED**

**ROBERTSON FRUIT PRODUCTS LTD.
DUNDEE ★ GLASGOW ★ ABERDEEN**

The People's Friend Annual

"Joyce! What's happened?" he asked.

"It's—it's Angus. He won't stop crying."

"Give him to me," he said, and carried him into the room.

"There, there, now!" In his tones was a note which made Joyce look at him with wonder in her eyes.

"He's stopped!" she whispered, amazed.

"We can lay him down now, he's going to sleep. Lead the way, Joyce."

They tip-toed into the bedroom. Joyce put the blankets over the sleeping baby, and they tip-toed out again. In the living-room they faced each other. Joyce's lips were quivering as she looked at Douglas.

"I don't understand. Why are you here?" she asked.

"I came to baby-sit. Kitty told me eight o'clock."

"She told me seven. She—she must have wanted us to meet here."

Douglas gave her a long, straight look.

"I wonder why?"

"To make it up, I suppose."

He took a step forward and caught Joyce by the shoulders. "And are we going to make it up?"

With a sob, she melted into his arms.

"Oh, Douglas, it would make me so happy!"

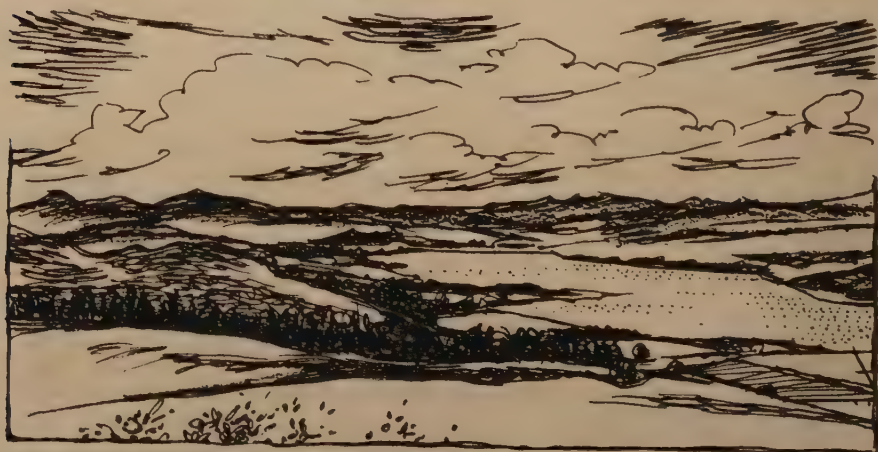
I WONDER if it has worked," Kitty said anxiously as Jack turned the key in the door. "Yes, it has!" she added in triumph as Douglas and her sister appeared with glowing faces. "Well, you two, when is the wedding to be?"

"We haven't quite decided yet," admitted Joyce.

"Well, we don't allow you out of this house till you do decide. What's more, it's to be within the next three months!"

Of course, Kitty got her own way, for Joyce was too happy to care.

And now the Barrs have a bungalow nearby and the sisters go out with their prams every day. Joyce's daughter is in one, Kitty's in the other, and Angus trots happily alongside.



Now autumn all her colours gay has scattered o'er the land.

HOME and OVERSEAS REMOVALS

*Household Goods
Office Furnishings
Marriage Presents
Personal Effects*



UNION TRANSIT CO., LTD.

PACKED

REMOVED

SHIPPED

WAREHOUSED

381 ARGYLE STREET, GLASGOW, C.2

Telephone: CENTral 9395 (5 Lines). Telegrams: "Transit, Glasgow."



PRIDE IS POOR COMFORT

by
Helen Cameron

IF there is one item on TV or the radio that the good folk of Scaurside tend to treat lightly, it is the weather forecast. Other places in the south-west may fulfil the dire prophecies of gales, snowstorms and floods, but not Scaurside, lying cosily between low, sheltering hills.

"We always miss the worst of the weather," is the usual remark heard in the steep, busy High Street.

But this complacent attitude received a rude jolt that November day when the "freak gale," as it came to be known, caught the Scaurside folk unprepared. Long after it was past, there were those who would look back on that storm as a landmark in their lives.

"Better take your mac, Johnny. The sky has a strange look this morning." Lyn Scott called from the bedroom where the baby was murmuring fretfully in his cot.

"There, there, my darling, go to sleep," she crooned, gently tucking in the covers.

Her husband's tall, lean frame filled the open doorway as he laid down the cases of samples he was carrying out to the boot of his small car.

"I'm sorry I'll not be back until round about six o'clock, Lyn. I don't like leaving you on your own all day. Do you think Hamish is sickening for anything?" he asked, tip-toeing over to the cot and looking at the baby's flushed face anxiously.

Just like mother tried to make



Puff pastry . . . light, golden,
delicious. Used to be thought
a trifle tricky to make. Not now . . .
with Hyrize! Take home a
packet. It's hygienically wrapped
and ready for rolling. Clever
cooks use Hyrize . . . every time!

Make sure of results with

Hyrize

PUFF PASTRY

MADE BY WM. SWORD LTD. GROVESIDE BAKERY AIRDRIE Tel AIRDRIE 2078 also at Arbroath

The People's Friend Annual

"It's probably just teething trouble. I'll give him a powder later on. Now off you go, Johnny, and finish your round before it gets too dark. You know Mr Bowman will expect a full book of orders with these new lines you're showing."

Lyn gently pushed her husband out to the door of their little cottage and gave him a parting kiss. She waved cheerily as he drove out on to the road. But the smile faded from her face as she turned indoors.

"I wish we stayed in Dumfries and I could pop over to see Mother and the girls whenever I felt lonely," she murmured.

When Johnny had brought her as a bride nearly two years ago to the Scaurside cottage which had been his family home, Lyn had counted herself fortunate. So many young couples were hard put to find a house.

Johnny had spent a good part of his savings to modernise the old-fashioned cottage lying half a mile beyond the small country town. Nothing was too good for Lyn, the lovely girl he'd met while on holiday in Douglas, in the Isle of Man. They had fallen in love at first sight, and when they discovered their homes were in adjoining counties, both knew that their romance would not end with the holidays.

The only thing that worried Johnny was taking Lyn away from a happy family circle to the comparative isolation of life in the country. His work as a drapery representative did not leave him much time for outside interests.

But Lyn, with her vivacity and charm, soon made friends among the townsfolk of Scaurside. Her commonsense counselled her to walk warily as an "incomer" until she had learned something of the relationships and rivalries that exist in any small community.

But there was one who seemed determined to ignore any friendly overtures—Mrs Forrester, the middle-aged widow whose house was nearest to their home.

ONE evening as they sat by the fire Lyn had broached the subject.

"There's something I've wanted to ask you for a while, Johnny.

What kind of woman is Mrs Forrester? Does she imagine she's out of the top drawer while we're just ordinary folk? She hardly speaks when I say 'Good morning!' and never once has she stopped to look at baby in his pram."

Lyn's voice sounded unusually resentful. She could cheerfully ignore any personal slights. But as a proud young mother, she expected her baby to receive some measure of admiration.

Johnny grinned.

"Well now, isn't that terrible?" he said teasingly. "Maybe she dislikes babies or just our wee rascal in particular."

Lyn rose to the bait as he intended she should. There was a sudden scuffle, ending with Lyn firmly anchored in Johnny's chair while he tried to smooth his ruffled hair.

"But joking apart," he went on more seriously, "I don't know very much about her. She bought that house when I was doing my National Service and Annie Ford, our old housekeeper, was looking after Dad."

"I didn't think Mrs Forrester had been so long in the district," Lyn said.

"Annie once heard there had been some tragedy in Mrs Forrester's life. But even during Dad's last illness there was no coming and going between

Funds Exceed 316 Million Pounds.

A free Savings service with



TRUSTEE SAVINGS BANKS

The Savings Banks have served the people of Scotland for over 150 years.

**Total Limit of
Deposit £5000.**

Deposits repayable on demand.

No stamp duty on withdrawals.

Compound Interest from £2 10/- per cent.

**First £15 of interest in Ordinary Department
free of Income Tax — £30 for husband
and wife.**

**Banks having a Special Investment Department
can accept up to £2000 in addition with interest
from $3\frac{1}{2}\%$.**

Head Offices of the Scottish Trustee Savings Banks are in the following towns:—

Aberdeen	Dundee	Inverness	Newburgh (Fife)
Alexandria	Dunfermline	Jedburgh	Paisley
Arbroath	Edinburgh	Kingussie	Perth
Campbeltown	Falkirk	Kirkcaldy	Rothesay
Castle Douglas	Galashiels	Kirkintilloch	Stirling
Cupar (Fife)	Glasgow	Laurencekirk	Thornhill
Dalkeith	Hawick	Montrose	

There are 284 Offices in Scotland.

The People's Friend Annual

our two houses. She seems determined to keep herself to herself. It's a pity, for it would have been much nicer for you if she had been a friendly woman."

That conversation had taken place some weeks ago. Lyn had met her neighbour only once or twice since then, but the position between them was still unchanged.

ALL that forenoon, as the sky darkened threateningly and the wind keened with ever-growing menace, Lyn felt oppressed by a strange foreboding. Hamish was restless and whimpering.

When the storm broke in the early afternoon Lyn's nerves were strained to breaking point. Never had she known such wind and rain. Even the stout outer door shuddered in the blast and the howling of the wind in the chimneys drowned the baby's cries.

Inside the cottage there was scarcely light to see. Lyn switched on the electric light in the living-room and kitchen and tried to forget her anxiety as she prepared the evening meal.

The hands of the clock crept slowly round.

Quarter past seven and still no sign of Johnny. Lyn peered anxiously out of the front window. Lashing rain blotted out everything. Then, without warning, all the lights in the house went out.

Lyn was left in total darkness, except for the glimmer of the coal fire in the living-room. Feverishly she groped in the kitchen drawers and cupboards for a candle, but found nothing except a pencil battery torch which gave only a feeble ray.

"This is dreadful!" she thought. "A power cut and not a paraffin lamp or a candle in the house!"

The baby's cries rose piercingly. Lyn hushed him distractedly but by the light of the fire his little face looked flushed and puckered in pain. It was then Lyn came to a sudden decision.

"I don't care if she snubs me. I'm going to see Mrs Forrester. She doesn't have electricity, so perhaps she can lend me a lamp or candle and tell me what to do for baby."

LYN wrapped Hamish carefully in a big shawl, tied a scarf on her head and put on an old overcoat belonging to Johnny. Its ample folds would keep the baby dry in her arms.

The front door was taking the full force of the gale, so Lyn went out by the back porch and was almost whirled off her feet. Stumbling along in the darkness and keeping as far as possible in the lee of the wayside hedge, she managed to reach Mrs Forrester's house.

A faint chink of light showed between the shutters of the window in the gable end. With her one free hand Lyn tugged frantically at the old-fashioned door bell, while the rain battered against her huddled body.

After what seemed endless minutes she heard the inner door being opened.

"Who's there?" a curt voice called out.

"It's me, Mrs Forrester—Mrs Scott from up the road. I've got the baby with me. Please let us in."

The bolt on the outer door was drawn and as soon as the handle was turned the gale thrust it wide open, revealing the pathetic figure on the doorstep.



THE LONG COFFEE TABLE

This contemporary coffee table serves the dual purpose of table and perch. Without the cushion it retails at £6. 17. 0 in Sapele, and £7. 7. 0 in Queensland Walnut.

Clean-cut design for modern living

SIX-DRAWER CHEST

There are many pieces of Eastcraft furniture designed with flair and care — like this neat and roomy six-drawer chest in Mahogany at £22. 16. 3.



THE TROLLEY TABLE

A really practical table for fireside meals! Beautifully proportioned, it opens out to give a 36" x 26" baize-covered surface most suitable for cards, sewing and letter-writing. £7. 19. 6.

Eastcraft



MADE BY EAST BROTHERS LTD., LOCHEE, DUNDEE

The People's Friend Annual

"Come in quickly and give me a hand to shut this door," Mrs Forrester said gruffly.

Lyn leaned her weight against the door while the older woman rammed home the stout bolt.

"What brings you out with a baby in a storm like this? Where's your husband?"

"He's not back from his rounds. I've never known him so late. Hamish has been fretful all day and doesn't seem well. Now the electricity has failed. I'm in a panic——" Lyn's voice broke in a sob.

Mrs Forrester took her by the elbow and led her to the back room where gaslight and a bright fire made the old-fashioned parlour a haven of peace in the midst of the storm.

"Don't distress yourself! Give me the baby till you get off these soaking things. Then we'll have a hot cup of tea and you'll feel better."

Hamish nestled confidently in the arms stretched out to him and cuddled his downy head against Mrs Forrester's woollen cardigan.

"How old is he?" she asked in an unexpectedly soft voice as she ran an experienced finger gently along his gums.

Lyn paused in unknotting her head-scarf to reply, and Mrs Forrester went on reassuringly.

"There's nothing to worry about. It's a tooth coming through. I can feel it with my finger——" She broke off and gently rocked him.

"I've something in my medicine cupboard that will ease him. Sit by the fire and nurse him till I get it."

Lyn thankfully slumped into the old armchair and watched as Mrs Forrester hurried out of the room. The chink of cups came from the adjoining kitchen.

A few minutes later Mrs Forrester reappeared with a laden tray on which stood a tiny phial.

"A little of this rubbed on his gums will deaden the pain. It's quite harmless," she reassured Lyn.

Lyn followed her instructions and was glad to see Hamish gradually relax and close his eyes in sleep.

"Tuck him up in the armchair and come in and sit at the table," Mrs Forrester said.

Lyn started nervously as a fresh blast rattled the window and her eyes went to the clock on the mantelpiece.

"Drink your tea now and stop worrying about the time. I've often watched your husband going past in his car. He seems a careful driver, so he can look after himself."

MRS FORRESTER'S tone was calm and reassuring and her stern expression softened to kindness as she watched Lyn control herself.

"You look very young to be a mother," she said suddenly.

"I'm twenty-three."

"Twenty-three!" Mrs Forrester repeated, almost to herself, and lapsed into a thoughtful silence.

Lyn saw her eyes turn to a girl's photograph on the mantelpiece. She noted, too, that the tightly-set lips were quivering.

1961 **Dickson Travel** 1961

OFFERS THE WIDEST CHOICE OF HOLIDAYS
WITH THE MINIMUM OF INCONVENIENCE

No changing of services en route on departures from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee.

***Marvellous selection of high standard
POPULAR PRICED CONTINENTAL "CENTRE HOLIDAYS"***

Maximum Time of the Centre of Choice.

8 to 16 Days from 26 Gns.

BELGIAN COAST AND PARIS.

RHINELANDER.

PARIS AND NORMANDY COAST.

BELGIAN AND DUTCH TOUR.

LUCERNE AND INTERLAKEN.

MONTREUX - INNSBRUCK.

GMUNDEN - CORTINA - VIENNA.

MEDITERRANEAN RIVIERAS Etc. Etc.

3 to 12 days ***British Coach Tour Holidays*** from £6. 12. 6d.

DEVON, CORNWALL AND BOURNEMOUTH.

CHANNEL ISLANDS, LAKE DISTRICT.

JOHN O'GROATS, SKYE.

**Sea Cruises,
Air Holidays,
Coach Tours, etc.**

**Booking and
Enquiry Offices:—**

Glasgow Office :
354 Sauchiehall St.
GLASGOW, C.2.
Phone DOU. 5662.

Head Office :—



DICKSON TRAVEL

45 REFORM STREET

DUNDEE

Phone 22322

The People's Friend Annual

"What a pretty girl, Mrs Forrester. Is she a relative?"

The widow turned her head abruptly.

"My only daughter," she said simply.

Lyn's face flushed.

"I—I didn't mean to be curious," she stammered.

"That's all right. It was your saying you were twenty-three that took my thoughts to Marlene. She was just that age when she died giving birth to her first baby—a boy."

Lyn laid down her cup and put a sympathetic hand over the widow's trembling fingers.

"I'm sorry. But your little grandson will be some comfort."

"He might be if I could only see him," murmured Mrs Forrester. "But I'm never likely to set eyes on him now."

"I—I don't understand."

"I tried to force Marlene into marrying the man I thought was right for her. Her father and I doted on Marlene. She was our only child and we gave her the best of everything, sometimes more than we could afford."

She raised her head and her eyes went to the photograph again.

"Before my husband died, the junior partner in the legal firm where he was a clerk, fell in love with Marlene. He wanted to marry her. It would have been a most suitable match. But Marlene was set on marrying a young civil engineer from Kenya. She met him while he was taking a technical course in Glasgow."

Her voice was no more than a whisper now.

"I didn't care for him. The life he offered her in Kenya was not at all suited to one of her upbringing and delicate constitution. But she wouldn't listen to me. We quarrelled bitterly. She left home and married him before he returned abroad."

"Were you not invited to the wedding?" asked Lyn.

Mrs Forrester shook her head.

"No! The first I knew of it was a letter Marlene sent from the ship on their way to Mombasa. She gave me an address but I was so deeply hurt I couldn't bring myself to write and wish her happiness."

Mrs Forrester sighed deeply.

"That's been my constant regret ever since. If only I had made up my quarrel with Marlene! But we both had that hard, unforgiving streak in us. When I didn't answer Marlene's first letter, I heard no more from her until shortly before her baby was due to be born. I wrote to her at once then with all the love I'd been repressing during these bitter, lonely months. But it was too late. The baby was born prematurely and Marlene died while my letter was still on its way."

Tears were trickling down Mrs Forrester's face and she fumbled blindly for her handkerchief.

Lyn bent forward and laid a kindly hand on the widow's knee.

"I'm so sorry. But tell me about the baby. Why are you not likely to see him?"

Mrs Forrester straightened up and wiped away the last of her tears.

"He's not a baby now. It's ten years since my daughter died. When her husband wrote he told me his married sister in Kitale was going to look after the baby. Two years later he wrote again to say he was marrying

★ **SCOTTISH** ★ **JEWELLERY**

*Ideal gifts for
friends at home
and abroad*

Grouse Claws, chrome, 7/11. **Thistle**, engraved, 10/6; with one stone, 8/6; with one stone and stag's head, 12/-.

Grouse Claws, sterling silver, without stone, 12/6; with stone, 16/11; with two stones, 18/11; one stone and stag's head, 18/6. **Stones**—amethyst or Cairngorm colour.

Kilt Pins.—Thistle design, 8/11, 4/11, and 6/9; silver, 11/8; with stone, 18/6; silver with stag's head and stone, 13/6.

Scottish Powder Horn, chrome, 7/-; two stone, Cairngorm or amethyst, 7/-; with pebble and two stones, 25/6.

Scottish Dirk, in chrome, four stones, 8/8.

Chrome Thistle Brooches, 5/-, 5/11, 7/3, 7/9; amethyst or Cairngorm coloured stones.

Silver Thistle Brooches, with Cairngorm or amethyst coloured stones, 8/6, 10/6, 12/6, 17/6, 18/6, 21/-, 27/6, 30/-, 33/-; 9 ct. gold, with real amethyst, 49/6; 9 ct. gold Thistle Brooch, with surround and Cairngorm, 90/-; sterling silver, with thistle surround and gold mounts, stag's head, 28/6.

Historic Brooch of Lorne, with Cairngorm or amethyst colour stones, in chrome, 8/9 and 12/6; silver, 28/-.

Silver Thistle Brooch, with earrings to match. Cairngorm or amethyst colour stones, screws or for pierced ears, 28/6; in chrome, 15/6 set; chrome, with stag's head, 15/6 set.

Thistle Earrings, in silver, screws or for pierced ears, 12/6, 18/6, 15/9, 15/11 pair.

Round Sash Brooches, with Cairngorm or amethyst colour stones, 10/-, 19/6, 34/6.

Silver-mounted **Scottish Pebble Brooches**, 19/6, 27/6, 32/6.

Scottish Pebble Bracelets, in silver, 50/-.

Thistle Bracelet, with Cairngorm or amethyst colour stones, chrome, 16/6, 18/6; silver, 33/6, 49/6.

Thistle Bracelet without stones, 7/6.

Scottish Charm Bracelet, 14/11.

Thistle Necklets, in silver, with Cairngorm or amethyst colour stones, 21/- and 26/-. **White Heather Brooches** in chrome, 8/6; silver, 8/6, 9/11 and 19/6. **Bar Brooches**, broom and curling stone, chrome, 6/11. **Gent's Tie Retainer**, with thistle, chrome, 6/9; silver, 12/6.

BOX AND POSTAGE 1/3.

ORDER NOW FROM

THE BOOK SHOP

9 SCOTT STREET (Opposite G.P.O.), PERTH.

Telephone 151.

The People's Friend Annual

a Scots girl and the boy would have a fine stepmother. He made it quite plain the child was his son and no concern of mine. I shouldn't blame him for taking that attitude, for I never had hidden my feelings towards him."

The chiming of the grandfather clock in the lobby made Lyn sit up with a start.

"You stay here with the baby," said Mrs Forrester, rising from the table. "I'll look out and see if the gale is easing off."

IT is difficult to break the habit of years. Mrs Forrester marvelled how she had come to confide her secret sorrow in this young mother. But somehow, as she stood peering out into the blackness of the night, a burden seemed to be lifted from her heart.

Just then a glimmer of light caught her eye.

"Did you leave your switches on, Mrs Scott?" she asked. "Your windows are lit up again."

Lyn hurried through and joined her at the window.

"Oh, isn't that wonderful! The gale seems to be dying down, too. I'd better get home and see what's happened to the dinner I was cooking. I can't tell you how grateful I am for what you've done for me tonight. I feel like a different woman."

"That's all right. You've done something for me, too."

Together they turned back into the cosy room where the baby lay peacefully sleeping.

"It seems a pity to disturb him just when he has settled." Mrs Forrester looked tenderly at him. "If you must go back, would you not leave him here till your husband gets home? It wouldn't take him a minute to turn the car and come back for the baby."

Lyn's heart responded quickly to the unconscious note of longing in the older woman's voice.

"That's very kind of you. It was certainly a job trying to keep him dry on the way over and surely Johnny won't be much longer now. You're quite sure he won't be a bother to you?"

"No bother at all," insisted Mrs Forrester.

Back in her own home Lyn scurried around making sure the power cut had not spoiled the dinner in the making. The gale had subsided, so Lyn kept a sharp ear for the first signs of the returning car. At last she heard the familiar sound and had the door open before Johnny was out of the car.

"Don't come out just now," Lyn shouted to him. "I'm coming with you down the road to get baby. He's at Mrs Forrester's."

Johnny's face showed his bewilderment.

"What's that you said? At Mrs Forrester's?"

"I'll tell you all about it," she gasped, jumping in beside him. "But, oh, darling, how glad I am to see you home safe and sound. I've been so worried something had happened to you."

"Quite a lot did happen. But let's get baby home first and then I'll tell you."

Johnny reversed the car and sounded the horn at Mrs Forrester's gate.

Lyn ran up the pathway and a moment later emerged from the front door with the precious bundle in her arms.

Mrs Forrester stood hovering helpfully in the background.



H M

Take Expert Advice

Ask your Private Grocer why it
pays you to buy H.M. Tested TEA!

The answer is simple —
QUALITY Means VALUE!



Henry McKechnie & Co., Ltd., 9 Cadogan Street, Glasgow. City 3238-9.

MAKERS OF SHORTBREAD FOR THREE GENERATIONS



*For your
friends*

at home or abroad

BURNETTS SHORTBREAD

*makes a welcome
all-the-year-round gift*

ROUND TINS

Thick Cakes 6/6

Petticoat Tails 5/6

OBLONG TINS

Fingers 6/6

ACADEMY STREET, INVERNESS
HIGH STREET, NAIRN

Postage and Packing 1/10 in
British Isles

The People's Friend Annual

"I hope you'll come again soon," were her parting words as Lyn once more thanked her warmly.

BACK home, with a steaming plate of soup before him, Johnny was about to speak but Lyn stopped him.

"Finish your dinner first and then we can talk. You must be famished."

While Johnny fell to with a will, Lyn gave him an account of her plight and how Mrs Forrester had proved herself a friend in need.

"It's a true saying, 'One good turn deserves another'," said Johnny contentedly as he lit a cigarette after his meal. "I wouldn't have been so late in getting home if I hadn't gone miles off my road to help two fellows. You see, my last call was at Craigieburn after five o'clock. The storm seemed to be getting worse so I thought I'd try to cut across country by the old glen road that joins the main road beyond Harvieston."

Johnny paused to knock the ash from his cigarette.

"Just at the Sheep Bridge, where the road comes steeply downhill and then takes a sharp turn to the right, I came on two men. Their car had skidded on the hill, crashed into the low parapet and somersaulted into the field beside the burn. Fortunately, they were able to crawl out with only a few bruises. But the engine was smashed. To make things worse, it was a bridegroom and his best man on their way to the Royal Hotel, at Barnston, for a five o'clock wedding."

"My goodness! What a calamity!" Lyn exclaimed.

"Yes, it certainly was for them. There are very few motorists on the glen road at this time of year, so it was a lucky chance I happened to come along. There was nothing for it but to leave the wrecked car where it was, pack them in beside me, and phone from the first A.A. box to let the bride know they were on their way."

"Well, you couldn't have done anything less for them, Johnny. The bride would be in a worse pickle than I was waiting for her man to arrive," commented Lyn. "But there's one thing I'd like for Christmas—a telephone installed. Then I wouldn't need to worry if you were delayed again."

"Our name is on the list, Lyn, and I'll try to speed them up. But as for your Christmas present—just wait and see what is in store for a good girl," said Johnny with a pleased look.

ONCE again Lyn's charm had scored a victory. It looked as if Mrs Forrester's reserve had melted away and she would become the good neighbour Johnny had wished Lyn might have.

Anyone who was kind to Lyn and the baby stood high in Johnny's regard. Now, if there was some way to show his appreciation—a Christmas present, perhaps. But maybe he should see how things turned out in the next few weeks before saying anything to Lyn.

Next morning Johnny set off with a light heart. As he drove past Mrs Forrester's house he saw her polishing the front door brasswork. To his surprise she waved her duster, the first friendly gesture he had known her to make.

"So she does mean to be friendly," thought Johnny gladly. "I must

**COUGHS, COLDS
DIARRHOEA**



There's nothing like
Dr. J. Collis Brown's
CHLORODYNE

Just a few drops in a small glass of
water brings relief within minutes.

Of all chemists, 1/10, 3/7.

The things for

GRACIOUS LIVING

are found at

JUSTICE



WHITEHALL STREET

• DUNDEE

Phone 26241

The People's Friend Annual

ask Lyn what she thinks about giving her a Christmas present. There's that new line in lambswool twin-sets that might be the very thing. Lyn could find out about size and colour."

A few days before Christmas Lyn saw the red mail van stopping at Mrs Forrester's gate and watched the gaily-wrapped cardboard box being



carried up. Knowing its contents she smiled happily as she pictured her new friend's surprise. But that was nothing in comparison to her own astonishment when minutes later a large box was delivered at her door.

"Are you sure this is for me?" she asked in surprise.

"You're the only Mrs John Scott in these parts," the postman smiled.

Lyn's fingers fumbled in excitement as she undid the string and strong

CONTACT LENSES

The Invisible Aids to better Vision

Particulars on application to

GLASGOW CONTACT LENS CENTRE LTD.

53 BERKELEY STREET, GLASGOW, C.3

Telephone Central 2770

EDINBURGH CONTACT LENS CENTRE LTD.

12 WALKER STREET, EDINBURGH, 3

Telephone Caledonian 3487

Perfect Sight Without Spectacles

Write, call or phone for Free Booklet and details of Deferred Terms

BenRoy

CEREALS AT THEIR BEST



BENROY cereals arrive on your grocer's counter with their full natural flavour.

They're packed in cellophane bags—double walled for extra strength—so that you can see how good and clear they are **before** you buy.

Look out for these BENROY cereals at your grocers.

LENTILS	BROTH MIXTURE	RICE
MARROWFAT PEAS	BARLEY	SPLIT PEAS
BUTTER BEANS	TAPIOCA	SAGO
GROUND RICE	BROSEMEAL	

Packed by

MATTHEW WHITE & CO. LTD.

CROWN MILLS, 66 WASHINGTON ST., GLASGOW, C.3

The People's Friend Annual

wrappings of the box. Lifting the lid and pushing aside the layers of tissue paper, she stared in amazement at a beautiful musquash coat with matching hat.

"So that was why Johnny was so keen to know what kind of fur was fashionable," murmured Lyn, preening herself delightedly in front of the wardrobe mirror.

"Like it, darling?" came Johnny's voice from the bedroom door.

Lyn had been so engrossed in trying on the fur coat she had not heard his car drive up.

"Oh, it's beautiful, Johnny! But you shouldn't have spent all that money on me," she cried, running to him and flinging her arms round his neck.

Bending his head to meet her lips, Johnny felt amply rewarded.

Meanwhile someone else was rejoicing in a most unexpected gift. When she had taken the parcel from the postman Mrs Forrester had thought it was the flannelette sheets she had ordered from a Dumfries firm.

Before unknitting the string in her careful way, she put on her spectacles. Even with their aid she could hardly believe her eyes when the opened box revealed a beautiful coral-pink twin-set in soft lambswool.

A Christmas card, tucked between jumper and cardigan bore the greeting—"With best wishes for a happy Christmas, from Johnny, Lyn and wee Hamish."

Her eyes brimming with sudden tears, Mrs Forrester took out the cardigan with trembling fingers. Going over to the mirror above the fireplace, she held it up against her.

"What a lovely colour and how beautifully soft it is. Marlene would have loved it. She was so fond of pretty things," she murmured.

It was a long time since anyone had shown her such affection.

Was it only her imagination, Mrs Forrester wondered, or perhaps the tears that misted her eyes, that made the loved face in the photograph appear to quiver in smiling tenderness. Like an echo from the past there sounded in her mind the dear, remembered voice—"Happy Christmas, Mummy darling!"



Season of goodwill and peace, we greet your glad return.

Reigns
wherever
it's poured . . .



McGavin
DIGEE
TEA

McGavin
MAVARA
TEA

'are always sure to satisfy'

McGAVIN & SCLANDERS ★ Tea Merchants ★ GLASGOW

Telephone: CEN 5391

Telegrams: 'TEA' GLASGOW

Why not install a **RAMSAY** *Aluminium* **Loft Ladder?**

Fits a trap opening
2ft. 6in. x 2ft.
or bigger.

Easy to fit
—simple to
operate.

Large selection of
all types of ladders
in stock.



RAMSAY & SONS (Forfar) Ltd.

Established 1771

Registered Office and Works:

**FORFAR - ANGUS
SCOTLAND**

Phone FORFAR 855 (3 lines)
Grams: "Ladders, Forfar"

Edinburgh Depot:

**B.R. MINERAL YARD,
Haymarket,**

EDINBURGH, 12.
Ph. Donaldson 1022

Glasgow Depot:

**B.R. MINERAL YARD,
Kelvinbridge, South Woodside Rd.,
GLASGOW, C.4.**

Phone WESTERN 3083

ALSO AT LONDON AND LEEDS



Mains Castle, Dundee

J. Campbell Kerr



*How still and calm the waters lie in the
breathless morning air;*

*The heart of man with wonder fills at such
beauty mirrored there.*